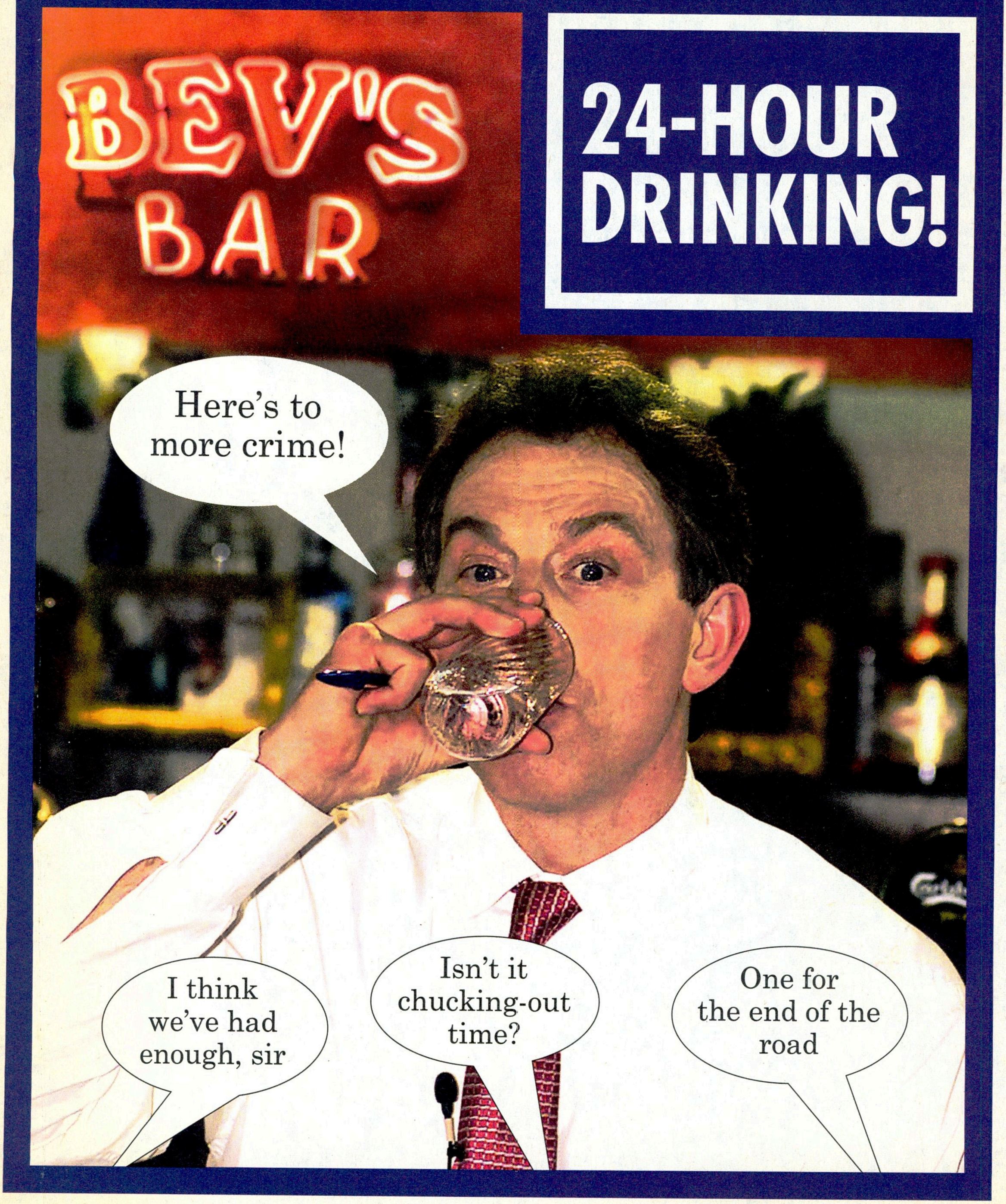
No. 1146
25 November –
8 Dec. 2005
£1.40

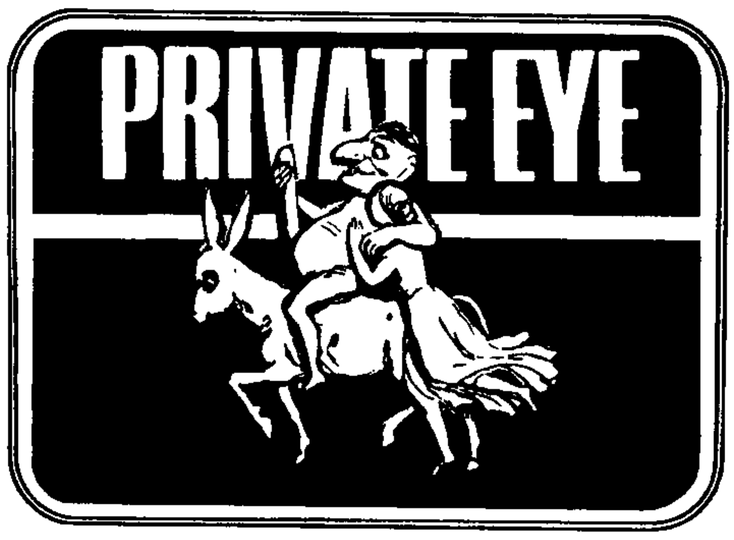
PRIVATE EYE


BEV'S BAR
24-HOUR DRINKING!
Here's to more crime!
I think we've had enough, sir
Isn't it chucking-out time?
One for the end of the road

Real beauty comes to those who wait.
In our case 100 years, in yours until Saturday.

MIKIMOTO

Vintage Collection



24-hour thinking

- Keeping it in the nuclear family 6
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- Double Lammy for UK orchestras 12
- Publishing c-Ashes in: Books 24
- Niger forgeries – yet more source; and why greedy lawyers love CFAs 25, 26 & 27

100 years ago

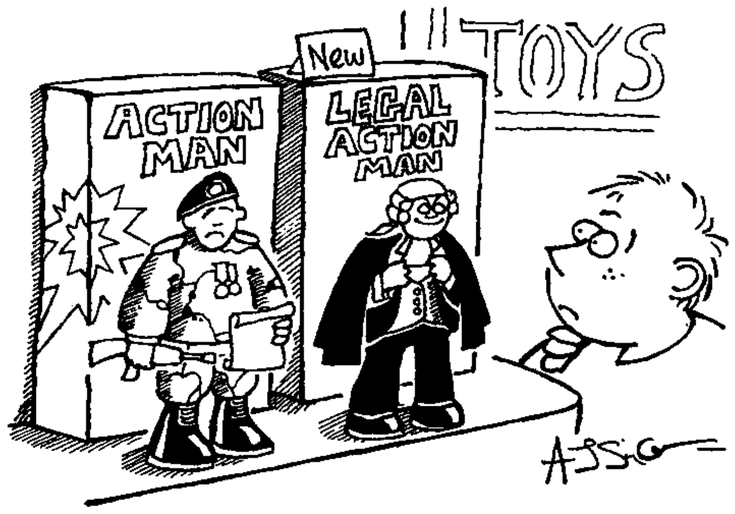
"Supporters of the Act argue that civil liberties must be sacrificed to deal with those suspected of terrorism. They are wrong… ordinary criminal law provides the police with wide powers to arrest and detain anyone suspected of a terrorist offence… It is not acceptable to deprive someone of their liberty simply to obtain information from them."

– Patricia Hewitt, former general-secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, opposing the Tories' Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1985, 20 years before becoming Health Secretary and supporting Tony Blair's Terrorism Bill.

JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

9 November 2005: Tony Blair tells the Commons it should support the anti-Terrorism Bill because: "The police and those charged with protecting our country provide, as they have, a compelling case for action, I know what my duty is: my duty is to support them, and so is the duty in my view of every member."

15 November 2005: Government pushes through the Licensing Act to allow 24-hour drinking despite objections from police chiefs in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Merseyside, Lothian and Borders, North Wales, Hertfordshire, London, the British Transport Police and the Metropolitan Police Federation.



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ABC

ANOTHER potential opponent of the Government's plans to introduce 24-hour drinking licences emerged last week when London mayor Ken Livingstone warned that "late-night and binge drinking [are linked to] an escalation of violence around suburban town centres and central London".

Ken should know. In 2002 revellers at a private party were shocked at around 1am when they witnessed a clearly tired and emotional mayor arguing furiously with his partner, getting involved in a scuffle with another partygoer and then delivering a foul-mouthed tirade to others present, before heading off into the night ahead of the arrival of the police. The fridge that night was apparently stocked with "dozens of bottles of wine, spirits and beer".

"DAVID Blunkett has presided over a chaotic immigration and asylum system while using a lot of inflammatory language about Britain being swamped," thundered David "Dave" Cameron at a meeting of the Centre for Policy Studies last week.

Whoops! The CPS, a right-wing think tank, was founded by Margaret Thatcher, who in 1978 caused a storm by saying that people felt "swamped" by immigration – long before Blunkett used the language which Dave now considers so inflammatory.

YET ANOTHER casualty of David Blunkett's recent travails was the inaugural "Polis Lecture" at the London School of Economics, in which he was due to discuss the role of the media under the title: "The News we Deserve."

The lecture was cancelled "due to unforeseen circumstances" – thus tragically depriving Blunkett of the chance to meet LSE student Monica Lewinsky, who recently began studying for a masters' degree in social psychology. No doubt they would have had much to discuss.

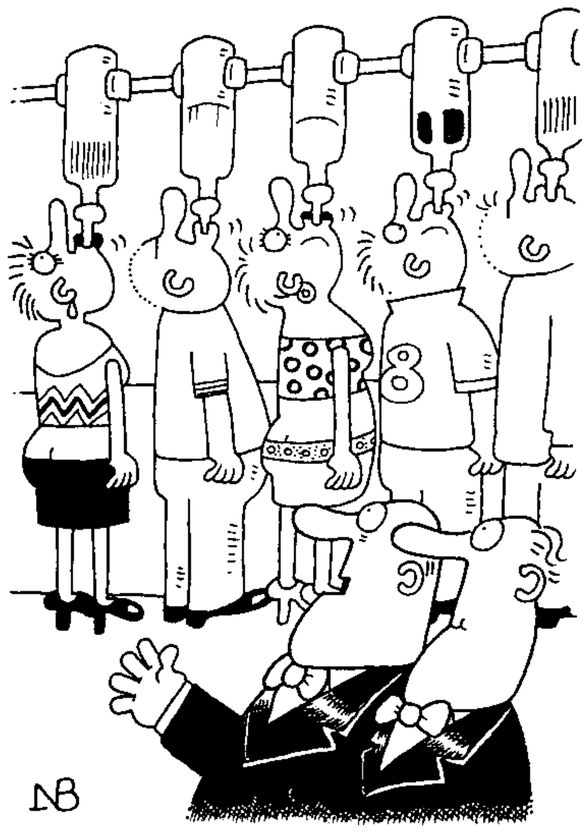
THE National Trust's plans for 191 homes at Cliveden in Buckinghamshire were chucked out by John Prescott this month.

The trust, in cahoots with the *Eye*'s favourite developer, Countryside Properties, wanted to build the new homes on the former Canadian Red Cross Memorial Hospital site at Cliveden in the grounds of the Astors' former home – given to the Trust on the very specific understanding that it would never be developed (see *Eyes passim*).

Nearby villagers objected to the scheme saying it would put huge pressure on local roads and services and planners agreed, but the trust fought all the way to the secretary of state – and lost.

SCOPE, the charity that recently took out full-page ads to insist that it isn't really closing services for disabled people (except the ones that it is: see last *Eye*) in order to focus on lobbying, has been hunting for a new director of marketing, fundraising, communications and campaigns.

Despite being £8m in the red, the charity is ready to fork out £90,000 a year (plus benefits) for the Islington-based lobbying post. How much are support workers at Scope's residential homes and schools paid to help residents with their personal physical care and providing non-stop emotional and physical support? A meagre £12,465.



"All our pubs have state of the art vertical drinking"

GOOD to see the Prison Service setting the bar high for its new recruits.

A self-assessment test aimed at showing applicants whether or not they have the ability to pass a selection test requires them to answer such posers as:

Q: 84 prisoners live on B wing which is fully occupied. There are two beds in each cell. How many cells are there on B wing?

Q: At HMP Rushton prisoners earn 80p a day for working in the sewing workshop. How much does a prisoner earn for 7 days' work?

Those who score 0-20 out of a possible 31 points are not, however, rejected. They are simply advised to go and get some extra "practice" at their nearest Prison Officer Association learning centre.

***EVENING STANDARD* columnist Neil Collins penned a devastating critique of Conrad Black last Friday, detailing how he had begun to "believe his own myth" and failed "to calculate the damage that recklessness would cause."**

"This Greek tragedy has been conducted in slow motion," mused Collins. "It's two years since Black was ousted from Hollinger, and more than a year since the board's report."

It also appears to have taken Collins a long time to reach his own conclusions on the matter. When investors in Hollinger began to realise the extent to which Black and his wife Barbara Amiel had looted their companies back in 2003, Collins – then the city editor of a national paper – printed only the most cursory mentions of the story, and even insisted that far from being forced to resign, Black had chosen to "retire".

Back then, of course, Black was Collins' proprietor at the *Daily Telegraph* – and far from decrying his boss's hubris in print, he took every opportunity to fuel it, going so far as to nominate his turgid biography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as his "book of the year".

LORD BLACK CHARGED

Street Of Shame

JOHN BRYANT had barely started work as editor-in-chief of the *Telegraph* titles before finding himself acting editor of the *Daily Telegraph* – mainly because the former appointment had proved one humiliation too many for Martin "Muscles" Newland, who hadn't been consulted or informed.

The new acting editor has had a generous welcome from rival papers' media sections – "a steady hand", "a calm head", "a journalist's journalist". At the *Daily Mail*, where he worked from July 2000 until earlier this month, he was "Paul Dacre's right-hand man".

This has come as quite a surprise to *Mail* hacks. In fact, Bryant was a part-time "consultant editor" whose main task was to deal with PCC complaints and write Paul Dacre's letters for him. It was Aidan Barclay who brought him to the *Telegraph*, apparently to show that chief executive Murdoch MacLennan wasn't the only person capable of hiring senior staff without consulting Muscles Newland.

But does Barclay realise that the man now editing the company's flagship title has had almost no hands-on newspaper experience since the beginning of the 21st century?

HUNDREDS of Free Tibet supporters and human rights protesters lined the Mall and shouted their disapproval as China's President Hu Jintao rode past in a coach with the Queen during a recent state visit.

Every broadsheet – or former broadsheet – ran photographs of the protesters either individually or behind the royal coach. All except the *Times*, that is, which pictured a cheerful pro-China supporter awaiting the president's arrival.

The paper's article was equally low key in its mentions of the protesters. The *Times*' diplomatic editor Richard Beeston wrote: "China pulled off a brilliant piece of political theatre by filling the Mall with thousands of pro-Beijing supporters." Eight paragraphs later he finally explained why the protesters were in the Mall and why their presence was politically embarrassing for President Hu.

Surely this reticence could have nothing to do with Rupert Murdoch's legendary fondness for China and its huge market potential?

STAND BY for some entertaining *Grauniad* score-settling when the case of sacked trainee hack Dilpazier Aslam comes up at an employment tribunal.

Aslam, who was fired in the summer after his membership of the extreme Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir group was revealed, is claiming racial and religious discrimination. He will call as a key witness Albert Scardino, the paper's former executive editor, who hired him and defended him during the controversy before himself resigning to avoid being sacked.

Scardino was formerly a close confidant of *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger, a fact which is making Rubbisher nervous.

The *Grauniad* might be advised to ask Scardino about his time as press officer for New York's first black mayor, David Dinkins, in the early 1990s. After Dinkins's election, Scardino was quoted in *Vanity Fair* as saying City Hall was no longer run by "tired old Jewish men" – a not very subtle dig at previous mayor Ed Koch. Scardino denied the remark but the mag stood by its story.

As such a staunch opponent of racial and religious discrimination, however, it is unthinkable that Scardino could have said such a thing.

ALEX Bannister, managing editor of Express Newspapers, walked out on Richard "Dirty" Desmond last week to join arch-enemy the *Daily Mail*. He is the third high-profile fugitive in as many months, following the departures of company secretary Maninder Gill and head of legal affairs Justin Walford. But is Dirty Des worried?

Not a bit. He has already found a brilliant replacement for Bannister in the form of John "Axeman" Maddock, a former general manager of Manchester City FC.

Maddock's record at Maine Road was brief but memorable. Soon after arriving, in September 1993 he sacked team manager Peter Reid – who, in his three years at City, had led them to two fifth-place finishes (and one ninth place) in the league. This precipitated a spectacular downturn in the club's fortunes and a relegation to division two for the first time in history. Maddock himself was forced out soon afterwards, with the catcalls of the fans ringing in his years.

We look forward to seeing if he can match this achievement as managing editor of the *Express*.

EMBATTLED *Daily Express* editor Peter "Mentally" Hill recently attended a meeting of the Northern and Shell hierarchy including *Daily Star* editor Dawn Neesom.

Among the subjects under discussion were some paparazzi photographs of Posh Spice looking thinner than ever. "Maybe she's had her ribs taken out," quipped Neesom, light-heartedly.

Hill, under pressure from N&S management over declining sales, evidently thought he had overheard a scoop. He emerged from the meeting and approached his news desk. "Here's a fucking story for you," he said, "Victoria Beckham's had two of her ribs removed."

A hapless hack was immediately set to work on this hot tip. Alas, he eventually had to inform the apoplectic Hill that the paper would be sued if it tried to run such nonsense in its pages.

"TEN XBOX 360s MUST BE WON" shrieked the front page of the *Daily Star* every day last week, as the paper offered its readers the chance to get their hands on the gaming console that is "at the top of most people's Christmas list this year. And they aren't even officially launched until December 2!"

As the Advertising Standards Agency has discovered in so many other cases involving Express newspapers, the claims weren't entirely accurate. The *Star* actually only had nine Xboxes to give away – the tenth having been snaffled by proprietor Richard Desmond as soon as it arrived at the office and given to his teenage son Robert.

Richard Desmond paid himself £51.7m last year.

ON 2 November the *Guardian* published a letter from Noam Chomsky grumbling about an interview with him that had appeared two days earlier, in which Emma Brockes mentioned his tendency to play down massacres for which the US is not directly responsible.

"As for her personal opinions, interpretations and distortions, she is of course free to publish them," he added magnanimously, "and I would, of course, support her right to do so, on grounds that she makes quite clear she does not understand."

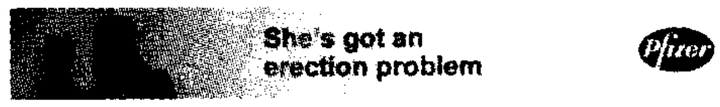
On 17 November the *Grauniad* announced that it had removed all traces of Brockes's interview from its website, following "a number of complaints from Noam Chomsky". Anyone

who wants to look up the piece in the *Guardian*'s online archive – the piece which Chomsky claimed she was "of course free to publish" – will look in vain.

BORIS JOHNSON was quick to rubbish a news story in last Wednesday's *Times* claiming that he would quit as *Spectator* editor by 8 December, and that chief executive Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill intended to replace him with Peter Oborne, Matthew d'Ancona or Quentin Letts. "Completely fanciful," spluttered Boris.

Not completely, perhaps. The *Times* story was written by Andrew Pierce, one of whose regular sources is his chum Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill. Indeed in 2000 Brillo offered Pierce the deputy editorship of the *Scotsman*. Might the fragrant *Times* hack also be in with a chance of the *Speccie* – but simply too modest to mention it in his report? He certainly has the requisite qualifications in the chief executive's opinion. As Brillo wrote two years ago in the *Evening Standard*: "Andrew Pierce is mischievous, waspish, humorous and knows all there is to know about politics."

WHAT a difference a year makes. Twelve months ago the *Spectator* was described by Michael Howard as "political Viagra" and universally known as the *Sextator*. Now it has the following advert on its website:



CONGRATULATIONS to sub-editors on London's *Evening Standard*, who managed last Thursday to add 9/11 and 7/7 and come up with a convenient one-stop-shop for all terrorist atrocities.

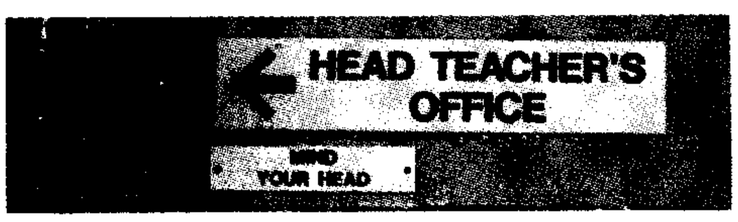
A news in brief item on the establishment of a Commons inquiry into anti-semitism quoted Bassetlaw MP John Mann claiming that: "I have seen books making absurd suggestions that 7/11 was a Zionist conspiracy."

IT CAN scarcely be called an uneventful autumn at Westminster, what with the government suffering an unprecedented defeat, the Tories choosing a new leader and David Blunkett resigning. Throughout it all, however, two hacks have remained silent.

Paul Gilfeather, political editor of the *Sunday Mirror*, has had nothing in his paper since 28 August. Paul Eastham, deputy political editor of the *Daily Mail*, has written nothing since 10 August.

Where oh where can they be?

I-SPY *Loughton*



Submitted by A J Catterall

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

"A photograph accompanying an article about circumcision (*Weekend* magazine, 29 October), was not of the surgical instrument used to carry out the operation, as we said in the caption. It showed a nasal rasp used for nose-reshaping operations." – *Guardian*.

THE lurid details of a sex discrimination tribunal brought by a British Army corporal against the Ministry of Defence has been manna from heaven on the Street of Shame.

Leah Mates has claimed that she was constantly subjected to filthy jokes and innuendoes from her male colleagues, and was forced to endure a night in a tent in Kosovo while one of them pretended to masturbate as he called out her name.

The *Sun* and *Times* have both printed thousands of words on the tribunal. Oddly, neither title has been moved to report the details of a similar case in the US where a federal agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity commission, has accused television network Fox News of creating a "hostile work environment" for women. It claims that a senior executive "routinely used obscenities and vulgarities when describing women or their body parts" and "routinely cursed at and otherwise denigrated women employees".

Then again, in contrast to the MoD, Fox News *has* as its ultimate boss the same Dirty Digger who owns the *Sun* and *Times*.

ACCORDING to last week's edition of journalists' trade mag *Press Gazette*, ex-*Mirror* "City Slicker" columnist James Hipwell told Southwark Crown Court that "his former editor [Piers Morgan] spent £20,000 on stock he discovered was going to be tipped in the column the next day."

What Hipwell in fact said in the witness box last Wednesday was that his colleague "Anil told me that Morgan had bought 20,000 shares – it actually turned out to be rather more than that."

As the *Eye* noted in its last issue, the court has also been told that Morgan's notorious investment in January 2000 involved £67,000 worth of shares in Viglen, rather than the £20,000 that he had previously claimed. No doubt *Press Gazette*'s failure to record either of these statements has nothing to do with the fact that its proprietor is one Piers Morgan.

"A VICTIM hailed for his bravery after losing a leg in the 7/7 bombings is a gang rapist who has cynically lied about his shameful past," the *Sun* revealed last Thursday.

Although Garri Holness had claimed that he was cleared on appeal, "that was a LIE. Yesterday the *Sun* challenged Holness – and he confessed his conviction was NEVER quashed as reported in the *Daily Mail*".

Whoops! Only the day before, when the *Mail* made its allegation, the *Sun* had also rallied faithfully to Holness's defence: "Terror bomb victim Garri Holness was wrongly jailed for the rape of two young girls 20 years ago, he dramatically revealed last night… He was freed on appeal after two years." A "close friend" told the paper: "Garri has suffered two major injustices in his life. One was when he was wrongly convicted of rape and the other was when he had his leg blown off."

A week earlier the *Sun* had hailed him as a "heroic survivor". Nice to see that the Murdoch rag can still perform what Kelvin MacKenzie would call a "reverse ferret". But the poor old *Mail* is rather less nimble. When it finally got round to reporting the truth about Holness on Friday, it buried the story on page 42 ("Rape Lies of the 7/7 Victim"). There was, of course, no mention that the lies in question first appeared in the *Mail*.

THE birth of a healthy son to stabbing victim Abigail Witchalls was a triumphant moment not just for her family but for many of Fleet Street's finest.

While the *Sun* cannot be blamed for the fact that the baby arrived six weeks prematurely, just days after its exclusive front-page revelation of a "Dec 25 tot for Knifed Abigail", the *Daily Mail* waited until the day after his arrival, 12 November, to explain to readers in detail "Why the surgeons were forced to intervene" (the nature of her injuries meant "she could not have the baby naturally" so an "emergency caesarean" was the only answer) – only for the Witchalls to issue a statement pointing out that "Abigail had a natural birth with very little assistance and did not require a Caesarean section."

Finally the *Mirror* and *Express* and, yes, *Sun* again, announced that the baby was to be called Joshua – "a Hebrew name, meaning 'the Lord is salvation', and a Book of the Old Testament". Sure enough, the family later announced that their son would be called… Dominic.

THE *Scotsman* newspaper recently identified one of the most vital issues threatening Scotland: the fact that a large number of her people do not have partners.

So vital was this topic that it could only be addressed through a three-day series of features beneath the banner "Single Scotland", packed with statistics, interviews and "case studies" of singletons like John Jacobson, 34, who despite "chatting to a very nice-sounding girl from Kirkcaldy" remained unable to get his end away.

Cynical readers wondered if the exercise might be related to the recent launch of the paper's online dating service, dating.scotsman.com, adverts for which were liberally sprinkled throughout the coverage. The *Eye*, however, firmly believes that the campaign sprang from the genuine devotion of the *Scotsman*'s publisher to matching up deserving bachelors with desirable partners *(see traditional photo on Letters page)*.

"Le Riot Nouveau est arrivé"

WHY all the hand-wringing in the *Observer* by media pundit Peter Preston over whether or not *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller was right to go to jail rather than reveal a source?

Preston eventually concluded that a duty to protect sources "can't be absolute. The protection it gives is problematic". Alas, he failed to mention another notorious "protection of sources" case in which someone also went to jail.

Back in 1983, the *Guardian* received a leaked memo showing that the then Tory government had misled parliament over the deployment of Cruise missiles. When challenged, the paper's editor meekly handed over the memo to the authorities, identifying the source. The person subsequently jailed was not the editor – a certain P. Preston – but the brave civil servant, Sarah Tisdall.

RELATIVE VALUES

CONGRATULATIONS to student journalist Sophie Bower, who last week scored not only her first newspaper byline but a most enjoyable jaunt to Hong Kong to report over two pages in the *Evening Standard* on how the city offered "an infinite number of shopping opportunities by day, while by night, the city plays host to a fabulous array of restaurants, bars and clubs."

Naturally, this lucky break owed nothing to the fact that her mother is Veronica Wadley, editor of the *Evening Standard*.

HACKWATCH

Cricketballs

CRICKET-loving *Daily Telegraph* readers who want to know what's happening in Pakistan naturally turn to the paper's cricket correspondent, Martin Johnson. And, since arriving in the country two weeks ago, he has been happy to enlighten them.

"Things are slightly different here in Pakistan," he revealed in his first dispatch (**11 November**), on the eve of the First Test, "where the Dom Perignon is a bit thin on the ground, and where you wouldn't contemplate 10 minutes in an open-top bus without reaching for a gas mask. Multan might just qualify as a spa town, but only if you were out here on holiday from Chernobyl."

The following Monday, **14 November**, Johnson had two full days' play to report – but chose instead to begin thus: "It is worth coming to Multan for the journey to the cricket ground alone, with scenes – if you take out the smoke-belching auto-rickshaws and all the other eccentric types of motorised transport – straight out of the Old Testament. St John's Wood Road it isn't." These transport-related musings continued for several more paragraphs. ("The local equivalent of Eddie Stobart are the donkeys, which are employed for carrying people, vegetables, pots and pans, and just about anything else you can think of…" Fancy!)

By **15 November** the Test match was shaping up nicely, but Johnson still had other things on his mind. "Yesterday was a public holiday in Multan," he wrote, "although you wouldn't have known it from the billowing dust kicked up by the usual horn-honking melee of bullock carts, bicycles, donkey trailers and auto-rickshaws. Take a day off here and you're liable to starve, never mind not get paid – a lesson England need to absorb if they are to win in Pakistan." By now the sub-editors were entering into the spirit of it, with the headline: "After the smog, the fielding was breath of fresh air."

And so to Wednesday **16 November**, with the match excitingly poised for a final day in which either side might win. Unbelievably, Johnson's report began once again with… smells and rickshaws. "There are a variety of aromas on the subcontinent, not many of which put you in mind of a French parfumerie," he disclosed, "and if your nostrils can cut their way through the noxious fumes belching from the motorised rickshaws, you're most probably inhaling something that can best be described as essence of cow pat. This is the stuff they set on fire to do the cooking – not many Agas and double ovens here…"

Later that day the English batsmen were skittled out and Pakistan won a famous victory. Surely even Johnson would give this news priority over his customary bulletin on Pakistani transport systems? Er, no. "On the early morning suicide run to the ground, there was a bicycle transporting no less than five people, including a boy of about eight balancing on the crossbar," he reported on **17 November**. "There are many ways of securing an appointment with the undertaker in Multan, balancing on crossbars in the rush hour traffic among them, and if he's been working overtime over the past week or so, it's probably because he's been busy embalming the cricket pitch."

And so to Faisalabad for the second Test. "Whether anyone would ever complain about not getting to Faisalabad on time is highly unlikely," Johnson wrote on **19 November**, referring to complaints about flight delays, "but you could certainly imagine a riot if you ever got delayed trying to get out of here. Faisalabad may not be the only city in Pakistan that would make you think twice about a holiday timeshare cottage, but with its textile factories, smoking brick kilns, size and extra pollution, it makes Multan look like Leamington Spa."

Can't the *Daily Telegraph* recall Johnson from Pakistan on compassionate grounds? The poor fellow really ought to be put out of his misery.

NUCLEAR FAMILY

WHY is the Bell Pottinger PR firm passing on potted biographies of MPs focusing on their supposed attitude to nuclear power to the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency (NDA)?

The NDA's job, after all, is to clean up the mess left by the old atomic generation, not to promote new nuclear power stations.

The NDA has paid Bell Pottinger £8,000 a month for "strategic advice". Using the Freedom of Information Act, the Eye obtained the papers passed by the spin doctors to the NDA. They include biographies of members of the Commons trade and industry select committee who oversee the NDA. The files focus heavily, and not always accurately, on whether the MPs are "pro-" or "anti" nuclear.

Barnsley MP Michael Clapham is described as "one of the most persistently rebellious Labour MPs, from the left-wing standpoint of the Campaign Group, voting for example against military action in Iraq and National Air Traffic Control Service privatisation" – which hardly seems very relevant to a public body like the NDA. The Bell Pottinger biog goes on to describe the MP as a "a self-proclaimed nuclear sceptic", adding that he is a "former miner… chair of the All-Party Coalfields Communities Group [who] has even been called a one issue MP defending a collapsing coal industry".

Mr Clapham told Private Eye he was pretty neutral about nuclear power; and while not in favour of expanding atomic generation, was fairly happy with existing capacity.

A similar nuclear paranoia colours the Bell Pottinger file on Wolverhampton South West MP Rob Marris, described as "a long-standing supporter of Greenpeace" and not a "proponent of nuclear energy". Marris told the Eye he was not in principal anti-nuclear. He added the NDA should consider why it is "spending money on Bell Pottinger to record the attitude of select committee [members] to nuclear power, as this is beyond their remit. In any case it might have been simpler and cheaper for the NDA to ask MPs what they think, as we would be happy to tell them."

The Eye asked the NDA why Bell Pottinger was producing these files. Its spokesman said: "We take no position on nuclear energy generation. We did not ask Bell Pottinger to find out MPs' views on that question, this is just something they have supplied. These may have been standard biogs on their files anyway."

The files certainly give the impression that Bell Pottinger thinks the NDA is part of the cosy nuclear club rather than a body charged with sorting out some of the worst problems created by the industry. In its bidding document Bell Pottinger emphasised that its chairman Kevin Murray "worked on the BNFL account during a tumultuous four-year period". It also said Bell Pottinger director Tim Walker was a "former special adviser to Jack Cunningham" when he was a very pro-nuclear MP and spent "more than a decade closely involved in the politics of the nuclear industry".

An "action point" of a meeting between the Bell Pottinger and the NDA managers says: "Bell Pottinger to contact Jack Cunningham in advance of AC dinner". In other words the lobbyists are paid to talk to Cunningham before NDA boss Sir Anthony Cleaver meets him for a meal. Appropriately this job fell to "TW" – or Tim Walker, Cunningham's former adviser.

RICHARD BOWKER, new head of Partnership for Schools, the government agency supposed to deliver the £4bn school-building programme, is already living up to the reputation he earned as former £275,000-a-year head of the Strategic Rail Authority (a job he did so well, they abolished it).

Treasury mandarins, unhappy that Bowker trousered some £300,000-plus from his pay-off at the SRA and is now getting another similar taxpayer-funded salary, are concerned he may already be setting up contracts and deals in the way he perfected at the SRA.

Bowker earned himself the contempt of Treasury officials by doing amazingly generous deals with train operators and consultants and only telling the paymasters when it was too late to stop them. His most extravagant was to Stagecoach's South West Trains where directors could not believe their luck. The company is now happily pocketing nearly £50m in annual profits for running a franchise where the higher revenue is almost entirely thanks to the buoyant London job market, rather than the quality of the company's service.

Part of the Treasury's aggravation no doubt springs from Bowker's refusal to do business with civil servants and his insistence on dealing direct with senior ministers. Bowker has apparently been demanding regular meetings with Education Secretary Ruth Kelly, rather than her number two, Jacqui Smith. He used to demand to see Chancellor Gordon Brown and his adviser, Ed Balls, rather than go through the "proper channels". Both avoided him. But the rather grand Bowker has been telling colleagues that he got the new job thanks to his old mate, Tony Blair.

Number crunching

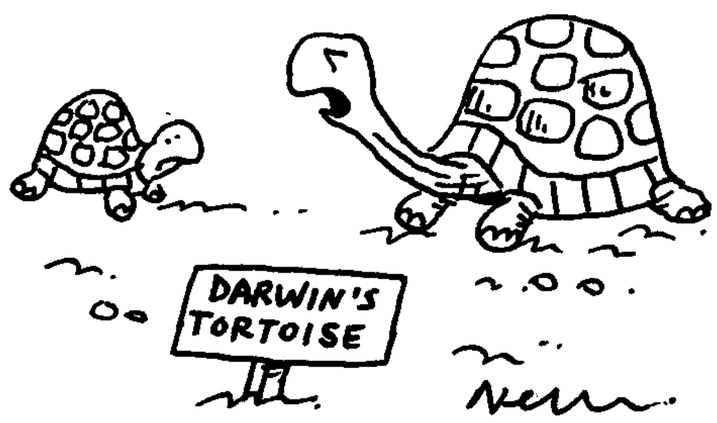
£5,000
■ Average redundancy payment to MG Rover workers following the company's collapse in April

£18,000
■ Average daily cost of DTI investigation into the scandal

SPENDING on Wales's £67m National Assembly building has often raised eyebrows, with a £15,700 bill for a reception desk and £9,000 spent on plants in the foyer.

Décor is one thing; but surely there could be no objection to spending on security measures for the Cardiff building? That is, until the assembly unveiled its latest anti-terrorist device: the tank trap.

The £278,000 steel barrier is primed to be sprung if an armoured vehicle comes lumbering towards the Welsh seat of power, entirely blocking the road. Unfortunately no one seems to have noticed the flat, wide pavement to the side of the road – plenty of space for most vehicles, which would have no difficulty mounting the kerb, to nip around the trap.



"They've raised the retirement age to 267"

WELSH Assembly members always look forward to Peter Hain's rare trips to Cardiff Bay.

The Welsh Secretary, who is preparing a bill to increase assembly powers, gives an annual report to the assembly and has the right to sit in on any debate he chooses. But when Mr Vain attends the official opening by the Queen of the new assembly chamber on 1 March, he might feel a little isolated.

Seating arrangements for the new chamber place the Welsh Secretary not with the ruling Labour group of 29 Labour AMs but with their Plaid Cymru rivals. Mr Hain will thus be perched on the end of the nationalist's five-member front bench. The *Eye* understands that at least one senior member of Plaid has already made a request not to be seated next to the Neath MP.

NO WONDER there is concern about the frequency with which physical restraint is used in secure training centres for child offenders (see *Eye* 1111).

Parliamentary questions have just revealed that the Youth Justice Board, which is responsible for the centres, employs consultants such as Peter Boatman, a former police officer at the centre of controversy over the Taser stun gun (which he notoriously tried out on his wife to show it was "safe").

It has now emerged that at the time he was a police officer involved in the UK trials of the stun gun, he was a shareholder in the company which imports them from the US. His company, Protect Systems, is now the only one authorised by the Home Office to import Tasers.

FE NEWS

LEARNDIRECT centres – where free online training for jobs is available to those without computers at home - have been dropping like flies, according to a report from the National Audit Office (NAO).

Government-funded LearnDirect offers courses via the internet in computing, business skills, languages, literacy and numeracy. The centres are mainly based in places like public libraries and community centres, and offer computers and advice on how to get started.

The NAO report reveals that 1,700 LearnDirect Centres have folded since the scheme began, 500 in 2003-4 alone. Many new ones have also opened, but the NAO expressed concern about the sustainability of centres "particularly in rural areas and centres dealing with marginalised and disadvantaged learners who require high levels of support." In other words, exactly the places where LearnDirect centres are really needed.

The report also found that 14 percent of the current centres are "actively considering" stopping offering the service because it wasn't financially viable and 45 percent had experienced cashflow problems.

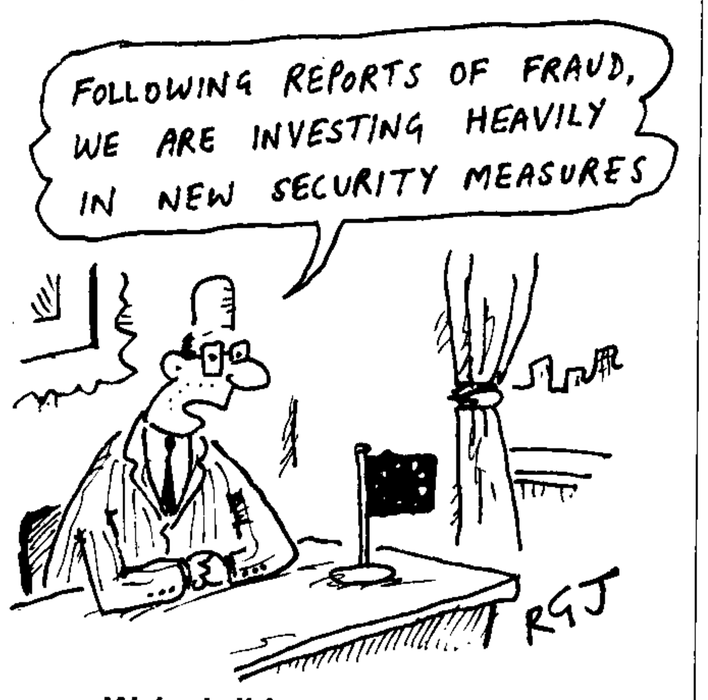
LearnDirect was launched by the Department of Education in 1998 and last year cost £205m to run while providing courses to 500,000 people. Although it was supposed to be partially self-funding, by selling training courses to businesses, it had raised just £12m by July this year.

DONCASTER COLLEGE employees, reeling from the effects of departing principal George Holmes's £1.8m deficit and 135 redundancies (*Eyes passim*), have followed the selection process of their new boss with some nervousness.

It turns out to be David Gates, principal of nearby Keighley College, who shocked lecturers by announcing 50 redundancies (half the staff) earlier this year after a £1m hole linked to "allegations of financial mismanagement" was found in college funds.

Apparently, the current buzz word among Doncaster governors is "continuity".

EU-phemisms



We're bribing everyone even more to keep quiet

Number crunchings

10 ■ Number of directives issued by European Union stipulating how accounts should be prepared

11 ■ Number of consecutive years that auditors have refused to approve the EU's own accounts

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

TESCO's latest feelgood voucher-collecting wheeze is a "children's fitness campaign" launched in September to help schools and clubs obtain free sports equipment or training sessions with professional coaches.

But for the young hockey players of Allerton, in Liverpool, neither kit nor coaches will be of use if the supermarket giant builds on their pitches.

Liverpool City Council has already rejected multi-million pound expansion plans for the 24-hour store, despite a £900,000 bribe (*surely "section 106 'planning gain' agreement"? Ed*) to pay for other local improvements. But Tesco is now fighting a public inquiry in the hope of getting permission to build on two all-weather hockey pitches, currently belonging to the University of Liverpool and well used by clubs of all ages.

*"I'm not sure **where** we are, all these Tescos look the same"*

QUOTE OF THE TERM

"The government is willing to provide a staggering £750,000 – the equivalent to three quarters of a million."

– Whitley Bay High School's statement on its bid to become a specialist college.

BAFFLEMENT at the workings of new technology has led to fresh embarrassment for Derek Simpson, general-secretary of Britain's biggest white-collar union, Amicus.

Eye 1143 revealed how, before Simpson decided Amicus member David Beaumont's interesting website (www.amicus.cc) was scurrilous and defamatory (because it criticised one of his mates), he had sent effusive emails in support of it (when it criticised his rivals).

Now Simpson has ordered Amicus techies to wage cyber war on the whistleblower. Unfortunately for Simpson – who has a degree in computing and whose union has tens of thousands of members who work in IT – his high-tech attempt to spike Beaumont's guns backfired badly.

Simpson is determined to nail three high-ranking Amicus officials, Des Heemskerk, Cathie Willis and Jimmy Warne, all former supporters, whom he suspects of having leaked to Beaumont embarrassing documents about assistant general-secretary Les Bayliss's links to a convicted fraudster (*see Eye* 1143).

Amicus geeks vainly scoured the union's computers and servers for evidence that the three suspended officials had a hand in leaking the material to Beaumont's website. So then they bombarded Beaumont with spam. For three days the union's email server forwarded four copies of every suspect email it received to Beaumont. The intention had been to filter out any outgoing email addressed to Beaumont so it could be examined. Alas, Simpson's cyber-sleuths were so incompetent that, instead, they automatically forwarded *everything* sent to the spam box on to Beaumont, who naturally complained.

The union explained: "This was due to a technical error. It was not harassment as it was not an intended act." In other words: "Don't blame us – we haven't a clue what we're doing!"

'Blackleg'

I-SPY *Kowlsruhe*

Submitted by J.Abson

In The Courts

THE case of the 4,000 displaced Chagos Islanders is back in court next month as they try to overturn last year's Privy Council decision barring them from returning home (*Eye* 1110).

The challenge to the Orders in Council will be heard on 6 December at the Royal Courts of Justice. The orders, made last June, overturned a high court decision that the islanders could go back to live in the British Indian Ocean Territory after their 30-year exile, imposed in order to make way for a joint UK-US military support base on the largest of the Chagos islands, Diego Garcia.

They had also been promised a return by the late foreign secretary Robin Cook who had long believed the islanders had been badly done by. But it was not to be. Why?

The British government has denied that the Americans have a Guantanamo-style detention centre on Diego Garcia, but the Americans themselves have been rather more equivocal. When Lawrence Di Rita, the principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, was questioned at a briefing in 2004 about whether the CIA had secret detention facilities on Diego Garcia, he replied: "I don't know. I simply don't know."

Down on the Farm

THE penny has by now pretty generally dropped that, even by its own standards, Defra has not exactly covered itself with glory in its response to the "Asian bird flu pandemic" (the one which an official of the World Health Organisation predicted could lead to "150 million deaths" worldwide).

This began, it will be recalled, with the "dead parrot" fiasco, when, in a shed in Essex run by a man with a criminal record for fraud, a parrot from Surinam supposedly died of what the media love to call the "deadly H5N1 virus".

First, it was discovered that there was not one dead parrot but two. Then Defra admitted that the samples from these birds (which were not in fact parrots but caiques) had got muddled up with those taken from a consignment of mynah birds imported from Taiwan. So it wasn't at all clear whether the infection had come from South America or Asia. But, as "a working hypothesis", Defra was now assuming that it had come from Taiwan (thus enraging the Taiwanese government, since inspection of the farm where the mynahs came from found no trace of infection).

Defra then admitted that the Taiwanese birds were not mynahs but finches, three of which had died from bird flu. This only enraged the Taiwanese authorities even more, since they suspected the finches had been smuggled from the Chinese mainland, where the H5N1 virus has been established for some years. The smugglers had used false papers from Taiwan, where H5N1 has never been known.

Entertaining though the "dead parrot" sketch may have been, a still more alarming measure of Defra's incompetence came to light when the chief vet, Debby Reynolds, invited in the Tory agriculture team and the Commons select committee for a "technical briefing". All the ministry's official top brass were present, including the permanent under-secretary and Defra's chief scientific adviser, Professor Howard Dalton. After an initial lecturette from Ms Reynolds, who clearly assumed the MPs knew little or nothing about the subject, the mood became rather more tense when the Tories' livestock spokesman, Owen Paterson, began subjecting the ministry experts to more probing questions than they had bargained for.

The central issue, Mr Paterson pointed out, was to establish which sub-type of the H5N1 virus had been identified in the samples taken to Defra's Weybridge lab. There are several sub-types of this virus, but only three have been shown to be infectious to human beings. Could Ms Reynolds and her colleagues say whether the tests had found any of these sub-types? Although the question had to be repeated three times, Ms Reynolds and her team refused to answer. It was painfully obvious that they didn't know. Either their tests had not been thorough enough; or, worse, they couldn't even grasp why this was so important.

'Muckspreader'

"OI!... are you looking at my bird?!"

FYE

OFI Sunday (ITV1)
I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here (ITV1)

WHEN Chris Evans was hosting his Channel 4 show *TFI Friday*, the channel used to insist straight-faced to the regulators that the title initials stood for "Thank Four it's Friday." But, as his return show after five years away takes place on the third channel, it isn't going to be possible to insist that the name of *OFI Sunday* spells out "Oh, Four it's Sunday."

Ofcom, though, may no longer bother about these things. Evans' comeback show is followed by an Al Murray quiz called *Fact Hunt*, in which the Pub Landlord cheerfully speaks the true title without the disguise it has in print. So presumably the regulators have developed either a tin hat or a tin ear.

This apparent loosening of censorship should theoretically be good news for Evans, allowing him to extend the line of media extremism that got him into trouble on *TFI Friday* and *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush*; but the problem is that so many of the audience will be thinking "Oh, Four it's Evans again."

The first edition of *OFI Sunday*, though, suggested that Evans has conducted some media research into why his career crashed and burned last time. It's as if a focus group told him that viewers and listeners were revolted by his arrogance and crowing about his own success. Accordingly, Evans seems to be aiming on this new show for humility and even pathos.

Looking tangibly smaller and quieter at his Letterman-style desk, Evans most brings to mind Alan Partridge hosting one of his early Radio Norwich morning shows after the failure of his TV career. And the decision to have as his first guest on the first edition Billie Piper, the wife who walked out on him, was spectacularly Partridgean.

Evans is one of those broadcasters (Wossy is another) who flourished in Britain mainly by pretending that they were in America but, even in the US, networks would tremble at a host interviewing a woman whom he's currently divorcing. Excruciatingly, Evans began by playing back the tape of their first ever meeting on *TFI Friday*.

His opening salvo in the conversation was "we're not divorced yet?", to which Billie confirmed that they have another year to go. He then painfully teased her with the possibility of a domestic humdinger about the possible involvement of others in their split: "The question everyone wants me to ask you about *Dr Who* is... why did you give up singing for acting?"

Even the most dedicated Evans-phobics will have found themselves pitying rather than despising him after these exchanges but such humiliation seems a big price to pay for repositioning his image. Further confirming that this programme is going to be car-crash television of the most rubbernecking kind, Evans also required his mum to drive around the studio in her invalid carriage.

With the host looking unlikely to have enough ex-wives and relatives to run *OFI Sunday* to a second series, how long before the red-headed presenter is forced into the career paramedic ward that is **I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!**?

This is a rare example of a reality TV series that got better as it went along – some of last year's casting, including Jennie Bond and Lord Brocket was genuinely clever – but the first night of the winter 2005 run left the depressing feeling that we've all been here too often and that the casting department was forced to go with third and fourth thoughts.

Two of this year's intake – David Dickinson and Jilly Goolden – have been on television far too often far too recently to offer the frisson of forgotten stardom that Tony Blackburn and Joe Pasquale brought. And to have two former actors from *EastEnders* – Sid Owen and Elaine Lordan – in the same edition makes it look as if agents are putting together job-lots. Carol Thatcher is quite an amusing idea but, in practice, encourages Ant & Dec into heavy-handed gags about "voting Thatcher" and putting Carol always as the Number 10 spot in the phone-in lists.

The fact that Elaine Lordan, who has a history of alcohol and psychological problems, collapsed twice during the open day and had to be taken to hospital reopens arguments that the series preys on weak people. And the rumour that Cannon & Ball are going to be parachuted in as extra guests is too gruesome. The way things are going, they'll have to rename the show *OFI Celebrity*.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

UPROAR at ITV News last week when staff found a secret document suggesting that closure of ITV's rolling-news channel was imminent, with the loss of 25 jobs.

But the bad news didn't stop there. The document – the minutes of an ITV news executive meeting on 16 November – also said reorganisation of the rest of the company meant that another 20 jobs elsewhere in ITV News might have to be axed. Finances are now so desperate, it added, that the company "has decided to buy just one I-Cam and one recorder".

There were, however, glad tidings for one hack. Although managers decided that outgoing Washington correspondent Robert Moore couldn't have a pay rise above the rate of inflation when he moves to Brussels next year (he is already ITV's highest paid overseas correspondent), they agreed to boost his living expenses to $70,000 and offer him a bonus in 2006.

There's also good news for Mark Bolland, former spin-doctor to Prince Charles and director of the Press Complaints Commission, who now runs his own PR company. But the minutes are maddeningly uninformative about precisely what the good news is: "DT happy with the letter GK has drawn up to Mark Bolland but it was suggested that CO should organise a screen test. The offer will be made subject to a satisfactory screen test." What can it mean?

"WE NEED to make sure that... key opinion formers like Sir Ian Blair no longer choose to watch Sky News rather than News 24." So ordered Peter Horrocks, head of BBC Television News, in a stiff memo to senior staff following disastrous revelations in one of his own programmes that the Met Police commissioner and other movers and shakers turn to Sky rather than the BBC to find out what's going on in the world.

Horrocks has much to do. As "breaking news" of Ariel Sharon's departure from the Likud Party emerged on News 24, anchor Chris Lowe read a couple of lines from a Reuters wire – "more on that story as we get it" – and, er, immediately introduced a 25-minute pre-recorded item about the travel industry.

And while viewers on Sky News watched a live update from correspondent Emma Hurd about a dissolution of the Israeli parliament, News 24 aired a distinctly un-newsworthy celebration of "the best products and services in the travel industry" – pre-recorded at a flash junket at the Royal Opera House.

HACKS at Sky News have become concerned by the on air behaviour of weatherman Francis Wilson.

In some of his "after lunch" forecasts – the 5pm one on 12 November was a good example – Francis appears, ahem, distinctly under the weather.

ROME
A HISTORY OF SEX AND VIOLENCE...
& GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER...
PEOPLE PREPARED TO DO ANYTHING...
TO EXPAND THEIR EMPIRE
BBC WHITE CITY
"Just like the good old days at channel 4!"
Commission Tits & Bums
DG
CHAIRMAN BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Xan Pyne

GOING LIVE

A PACKAGE on BBC News 24 revealed that Abigail Witchalls had given birth to a baby boy, seven months after being stabbed and left for dead, and that "she is expected to go home in the next two days".

The channel then went live to a hackette standing outside the hospital. "So June, when will Abigail be going home?" the anchor asked.

"In the next two days," came the confident reply.

THE *Sun*'s exclusive story of *EastEnders* actor Joe Swash's "fight to survive deadly meningitis" was bulked out to fill a double page spread with the inclusion of a "touching get-well card from Joe's soap mates", pictured beneath the caption "East Tender".

Clearly visible among the messages were the following: "Joe U Ginger Bastard", "Hurry up Big Boy I got no-one squeezing my Tits!" and the heart-rending "Swashy – Don't be a Cunt!"

BOSSES at Channel 4's *Big Brother* bombarded *Channel 4 News* with calls asking it to cover the "story" that former contestant Makosi Musambasi had won her right to avoid being returned to Zimbabwe despite having breached the rules of her work visa.

The resulting item included a trail, during which the "celeb" pouted at the camera before looking aside and asking "was that ok?", a package and an interview with Jon Snow, who reminded viewers that Makosi had "rapidly become the star of the show" – a big earner of course for Channel 4.

So what's Makosi going to do next? "I am going to take advantage of the media work I've got now," she replied twice. Thanks to *Channel 4 News*, she's off to a fine start.

ISKY

"IF EVER THERE was a case against the BBC putting up the licence fee then the list of National Television Award winners has to be it. Tell me someone is having a sick joke at our expense. *Doctor Who* – best drama? Sharon Osbourne – best expert? In what? The dross was endless. Thank God for Sky, C5 and quality US programming. Stewart Fox, Waltham Abbey."

– Letter to *Sun*, 6 November.

THE month that George Best spent yo-yo-ing in and out of intensive care at the Cromwell Hospital in London was a trying time for his family but rewarding for casual staff at Sky News.

Every fluctuation in Best's condition resulted in the broadcaster pulling in extra staff for lucrative overnight shifts, just in case the legendary drinker and one-time football player kicked the bucket in the early hours and left them without enough time to put together a suitably adulatory package for the breakfast show.

LOOK closely at posters for Jim Jarmusch's new film *Broken Flowers* – starring Bill Murray, with Sharon Stone and Jessica Lange – and you'll notice a UK Film Council logo.

Yup, the Film Council's dream of giving British lottery money directly to an all-American feature film has come true.

The seed was planted a few years ago when the council's chairman was Alan Parker, who set out to have as many American movies as possible reclassified as British so that his beloved Hollywood studios could benefit from the tax advantages of "UK film" status. And now it has been brought to fruition by Parker's successor, Stewart Till.

No surprise there, as Till is also chairman and chief executive of UIP, the biggest film distributor in the world – which is owned by the Hollywood studios. As we pointed out a year ago (*Eye* 1118): "Who better to determine policy and distribute public money on behalf of the UK film industry than a man with a fiduciary duty to shareholders in California?"

CONGRATULATIONS to Ofcom, whose new report "Language and Sexual Imagery in Broadcasting: A Contextual Investigation" establishes after more than a year of research that nigger, cunt and motherfucker are very offensive words.

It also offers the following startling insight: "Bastard God: Profanity could be offensive, but no one has ever heard of this phrase."

YEAH BUT NO BUT YEAH
IT'S SO HARD BEING THE ONLY GAY IN THE VILLAGE
LITTLE BRITAIN
I ♥ LITTLE BRITAIN
KIDS TODAY SAY THE UNFUNNIEST THINGS!
PAUL WOOD

AD NAUSEAM

THE analogue switch-off is going to be far from simple if the working practices of Digital UK (formerly SwitchCo) are anything to go by.

Digital UK is the body set up by the government and TV industry to manage the digital switchover. Much of this "management" will be about communication, and so about three months ago Digital UK held a pitch for an advertising agency. After the usual corporate cockfight, AMV was appointed. But then Digital UK realised it had breached regulations on government tenders and so was obliged to put the account up for pitch again. After apologizing to a furious AMV, another review was announced a month ago, and several agencies were asked to pitch. One of these was AMV, who tacitly had been assured the retrial was just a formality. Sure enough, it was announced last week that AMV had indeed been awarded the business, meaning Digital UK made the other agencies spend significant time and money for what was actually a *fait accompli*. Now *that's* how to make friends in adland...

A LATE contender for this year's most nauseating ad comes in a new campaign from Bulldog broadband, the Cable & Wireless-owned internet service provider (ISP) which comes on the back of a year in which Bulldog customers have had to suffer a rash of technical problems and appalling customer service.

After myriad complaints, in September Ofcom launched an investigation. This has now closed after Bulldog promised to clean up its act, but will reopen if complaints recur. According to technology site ZDnet.co.uk, many of Bulldog's irate customers remain steadfastly irate.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"There has been so much nonsense in the press about Burberry dropping Kate. It really is all nonsense. Is Kate still part of our family? Absolutely. Yes, she has some issues that she probably needs to resolve, but don't we all? We are certainly not going to say, because of one incident, that she has nothing to do with us. That would be so hypocritical."

– *Christopher Bailey, creative director of Burberry,* Evening Standard, *10 November 2005*

"Kate has worked successfully with Burberry over the years. However, we have never had a contract with her. At the current time we had one project scheduled with Kate for this autumn and in the circumstances both Kate and Burberry have mutually agreed that it is inappropriate to go ahead. We are saddened by her current circumstances and hope she overcomes her problems as soon as possible."

– *Official statement by Burberry, 21 September 2005*

DUMB BRITAIN

University Challenge, BBC2

Jeremy Paxman: Dubbed "the Sphinx" in the 1920s on account of her taciturn manner off-screen, which Hollywood actress retired from public life in 1941?

Oxford students (*after conferring*): Julie Andrews.

Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which movie star was married to Humphrey Bogart and was also a cousin of the former Prime Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres?

Contestant: Gene Kelly.

Robinson: In government organisations, what does the letter M stand for in MI5 and MI6?

Contestant: Murder.

George Jones show, Radio Ulster

George Jones: What are secateurs used for?

Contestant: They work in offices.

National Lottery Jet Set, BBC1

Q: Sofia is the capital of which European country?

A: Palestine.

Q: Which song composed by Edward Elgar is traditionally used to close the Last Night of the Proms?

A: Auld Lang Syne

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

KATE MOSS IS BACK AT WORK...
GOD- IF I EVER SEE THE PERSON WHO FILMED ME SNORTING COKE!!!
...I'LL GIVE HIM A HUGE KISS AND SAY "THANK YOU"!!!
"KATE IS GREAT!" SAY PUBLICITY
KATE PUBLICITY PUBLICITY PUBLICITY
KATE
KATE
THE DAILY KATE

DOING THE ROUNDS

Unsexy illnesses, No 94: Cystic fibrosis

IN APRIL 2001, Public Health Minister Yvette Cooper announced a national neo-natal screening programme for cystic fibrosis (CF), the UK's most common, life-threatening inherited disease. So why hasn't it happened yet?

Biochemical screening for CF has been available here since 1980, and newborns served by laboratories in East Anglia, Trent, Northampton and Leeds have been screened for some years, as have those in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. An England-wide service was due to be rolled out last year, led by the UK Newborn Screening Programme Centre, but four and a half years after Cooper's promise, it still hasn't arrived.

Screening has become more important as treatments for CF have improved. In CF, the lungs and pancreas can get clogged with thick sticky mucous; and in the 1930s, when the disease was first recognised, 70 percent of babies died within a year. Now, thanks to the development of specialist paediatric and adult CF centres, and the combination of early diagnosis and swift treatment, patients can live into their 40s.

In the absence of screening, many patients are diagnosed late, if at all. One in 25 of us carries the faulty CF gene. Statistically there are 2.3m carriers of the faulty gene and 7,500 people with CF in the UK. However, only 6,000 are treated in specialist centres. The remaining 1,500 are either as yet undiagnosed or being treated by non-specialists, who see only a few cases a year and lack expertise and resources.

For seven years evidence has been published that specialist centres get better results* because they treat very aggressively to maintain maximum weight and lung function. However, they cannot reverse the damage done by inadequate treatment or late diagnosis. A screening programme that channelled all affected babies into specialist care would help resolve this.

Alas, CF is not a high priority illness, and research by the CF Trust a year ago found that a third of patients have trouble getting the best drugs and treatments even at specialist centres. Not one of the 38 centres provided "recommended levels of care" and only nine were able to employ even half the staff they needed. The overall shortfall in funding for CF care was estimated at 50 percent. At present, indebted primary care trusts (PCTs) can simply refuse to pay for proper CF care for their patients, which may explain the delay in screening. What's the point in identifying more babies with CF if you aren't going to commit the resources to providing the best treatment for them?

Meanwhile, £17.5bn of NHS funding is being put aside for the private sector for absurdly expensive and inflexible PFI contracts and £6.2bn has been committed to an NHS IT superhighway that has thus far delivered very little. Indeed, according to its boss Richard "£250,000 a year" Granger, it is "in grave danger of being derailed." Here's a thought: give the money back to patients.

M.D.

**Clinical outcome in relation to care in centres specialising in cystic fibrosis,* British Medical Journal 1998; 316: 1771-1775 (13 June).

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

WAIT, WAIT! THAT'S OUR NEW DEPARTMENT
THE OLD WING IS OVER THERE...
I KNOW
BUT YOU GUYS REMOVED MY NAN'S HEALTHY KIDNEY BY MISTAKE

SIGNAL FAILURES

Steer wheel

"NEW" Labour's revolving-door policy didn't apply to former Strategic Rail Authority director Jim Steer, who didn't have any doors to negotiate as he moved between private and public sectors.

Steer was managing director of transport consultants Steer Davies Gleave until March 2002. The following month he resurfaced as the SRA's managing director of strategic planning, "responsible for envisioning future transport scenarios and then undertaking all the necessary planning, economic and financial analysis to develop robust business and investment cases for change".

Three years later the Department for Transport wound up the SRA, but Steer didn't face an uncertain future. Last month he became a director of SDG. Breaking the happy news, SDG revealed that he'd never really left the company and had only been "on secondment" to the SRA.

PS: In 2000 the SRA didn't give SDG a single consultancy contract, ditto in 2001. But in 2002 the SRA paid SDG £219,000 for three contracts including "modelling and strategic review of rail industry". In 2003 the SRA awarded SDG 12 other consultancy contracts, with £1.184m of public money.

PPS: Before his secondment to the SRA, Steer helped put together the modernisation plan for the west-coast mainline, which proved such a disaster a new 200mph line could have been cheaper to build (*Eyes passim*). At the SRA, Steer chaired the "west-coast main line upgrade project board", which failed to deliver the promised 140mph top speed and modern signalling system. Now that he's back at SDG, his company says "he plans to take a personal interest in the development of high-speed rail lines in Britain". Great.

WHILE "new" Labour's happy to pretend it's interested in a new north-south railway costing billions of pounds, and Tony Blair even makes mention of magnetic levitation technology, in reality it won't even cough up £10m for a rail project where benefits outweigh costs.

Early this month Network Rail said the Waterloo-Exeter line needed extra capacity west of Salisbury, where there's only one track for both directions. The obvious solution is restoring the second track throughout, but that's too ambitious for the world's fourth richest economy. So NR proposed patches of second track costing £10m to £25m.

Three days later the Department for Transport ruled out public funding, although it admitted the improved services would have a "positive benefit-cost ratio… subject to funding being identified". It insisted "third party" cash would be needed. That would increase the complexity, the interest rate and the subsidy required to pay back the borrowing – which would then give Transport Secretary Alistair Darling an excuse to block the scheme on the grounds of escalating costs.

That's exactly what happened to Leeds' Supertram scheme. Darling claims he blocked it because the cost had increased since an earlier estimate, although he knows the cost was inflated by his insistence such schemes must be privately built and operated (*Eye* 1103). Inflation across the construction industry also pushed up Supertram's costs. That's a massive problem for road schemes too, including the M25 widening, but Darling won't pull the plug on them.

"New" Labour still insists Network Rail is a private company, to keep billions of pounds of debt off Gordon Brown's books. So how come Darling can tell NR it mustn't use its own money to upgrade the Exeter line and would need third-party funding?

JUST FANCY THAT!

37 percent: Cost increase cited by government as reason for ditching Leeds Supertram scheme, designed to reduce car traffic (Source: *BBC News*, 3 November)

70 percent: Cost increase which hasn't stopped government approving A66 Temple Sowerby bypass, Cumbria, which will generate more traffic (Source: *BBC News*, 6 November)

IN OCTOBER Mr Justice Mackay said Balfour Beatty's involvement in the Hatfield rail accident was "one of the worst examples of sustained industrial negligence in a high-risk industry I have ever seen". So presumably a bus-only road with a top speed of just 30mph is more suited to its talents than Britain's fastest railways.

Nevertheless Edinburgh bus passengers are finding that even a mile-long "busway", carrying far less traffic than normal urban routes, is a challenge for Balfour Beatty. Last week the city's £10m busway closed for emergency repairs for the second time in five months. "Surveys carried out following the previous one-week closure in the summer have shown that contractors Balfour Beatty failed to bring some areas to within the required specification and some undulations remain," explained officials as the 10-day closure began.

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

MALICE IN SUNDERLAND

THE PRICE of silence is subject to roaring inflation in north-east England. The Sunderland Housing Group (SHG), the "registered social landlord" which manages the city's 36,500 former council houses, has just paid £1.4m, the *Eye* has learned, to a former director who was threatening to rip the top from a large can of very nasty worms.

Kevin Kelly, SHG's former director of corporate services and company secretary, fell out with the group's chief executive, Peter "Emperor" Walls (*Eyes passim*), early last year after raising concerns about the handling of tenders for building contracts worth £320m. He warned SHG chairman Bruce Wheelan that "the competition process has been open to manipulation and distortion" after builders Bellway were left off the shortlist despite making a bid that was £400,000 lower than rivals Lovell.

To make matters worse, SHG then doctored the original assessments of the competing firms' bids in order to cover up apparent irregularities. Kelly warned that some of SHG's senior management had "fallen short of the professional standards required during tendering". The board had to "take more time to satisfy yourselves that you are making decisions that are legitimate and lawful".

Kelly's advice was rewarded by an unspecified allegation that he had "bullied and harassed" a manager involved in the procurement process, Eddie Hutchinson. Kelly, who was on £100,000 a year, was offered £150,000 to resign with an "unblemished" record. Kelly refused and was eventually sacked, so he brought a claim for unfair dismissal, which was to have been heard this month. At the last minute, however, he was handed an emperor's ransom to go away quietly. A joint statement said SHG accepted that Kelly had been "unfairly and wrongly" dismissed.

Eddie Hutchinson, the man who claimed Kelly had bullied him, is left looking a patsy. He, too, now has an employment tribunal case in the pipeline. The price for his silence, the *Eye*'s SHG moles say, is being put at an eye-watering £1.7m.

● SUCH are the depths of cronyism in Sunderland that the 17 Labour councillors who sit on Sunderland Housing Group's main and area boards (Conservatives refuse to) won't hear a word against SHG. Recent selections of Labour party candidates for next year's city council elections would appear to bear this out. Stephen Hanratty, a Labour Party member and city magistrate, has been kept off the list of potential candidates on the spurious grounds that in 2003 (while not a member of the Labour Party) he signed nomination papers for an independent candidate. His real crime was to have dared to criticise SHG in a BBC interview. Meanwhile former councillor and SHG director Kevin O'Connor has been selected, despite having a 2002 conviction for breaching the data protection act (he read out personal information about a "problem" tenant, taken from council files, at a public meeting and was fined £1,000) plus a 2001 drink-driving conviction which earned him a £200 fine and two-and-a-half year ban. Also on the list of potential candidates, until Labour Party members kicked up a stink, was Tommy Wright, who was suspended as a councillor for two months in September after it was discovered that his council-issued laptop had been used to view and store hard porn images from the internet. Wright, 52, nobly blamed his grand-children.

SHORT CHANGED

AFTER PR outfit Verve took over Tower Hamlets council's communications department in August (*Eye* 1141) one of its first acts was to institute a "review" of staffing – management-speak for an axe-sharpening exercise.

The review duly concluded that the services of journalist Eileen Short, who has worked in the department for the past 14 years, were no longer needed. Ms Short's unsuitability for her post is of course entirely unrelated to the fact that in her free time she has campaigned on behalf of tenants against the privatisation of council housing. Tower Hamlets is currently attempting to sell off its housing stock, despite having lost several ballots of tenants – all very embarrassing for the council and its PR supremo, Verve MD Lorraine Langham, who prides herself on her "reputation management" skills.

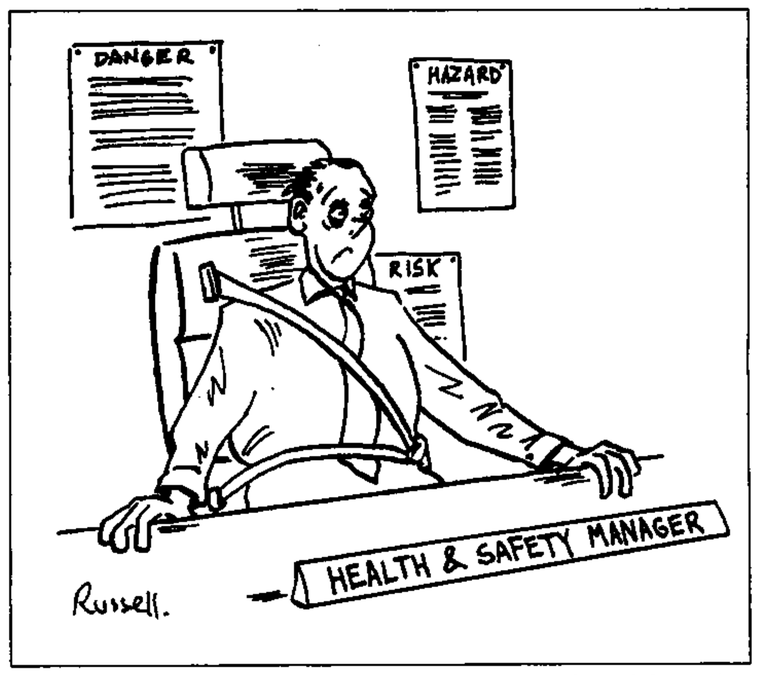
The treatment of Ms Short, who is the sister of MP Clare, fits in with what Langham wrote in a booklet called *The Quick and Dirty Guide to PR 2*, back in 1998:

"Most people don't like change – even if it is for the better. At the beginning there will almost be more people opposing the change than supporting it. They will all be communicating. Identify your heroes – those on your side – and work with them. The remainder are your opponents – the cynics and critics. Most of your opponents will be passively opposed – unhappy but not dangerous. You need to know who is actively opposed to you and could undermine your message. You need to take them out of the equation fast." As Eileen Short is now finding out.

BIRD BRAIN

THE latest brainwave of Westminster council's communications department, headed by Alex "chicken wrestler" Aiken (*Eyes passim*), led council staff and members of the public to miss the Remembrance Day two-minute silence on 11 November.

Normally the Tory council's public address system announces the start of the two minutes at City Hall. This year, on the evening of 10 November, after most staff had gone home, an email was sent to department heads to the effect



that, in a break with tradition, they should make their "own arrangements" for staff to show their respect.

On the Friday morning, because some managers were on leave, off sick or in meetings, the email went unread by many. Staff therefore did not find out until it was too late that there would be no announcement of the start of the two minutes, leading many to leave the silence unobserved.

After numerous protests from staff, a grovelling apology has been posted on the council's internal website, with a promise to revert to traditional Remembrance observance next year.

● AS REPORTED in *Eye* 1134, the Standards Board for England (SBE) decided to take no action against former Rochdale councillor Robin Parker and two colleagues who covered up the fact that a fellow Labour councillor had served a jail sentence for assaulting two female detectives with a kitchen knife, and was therefore not qualified to stand in local elections. No public interest would be served by doing anything about the matter, concluded the SBE's "ethical standards officer", especially as Parker was "no longer a councillor". Yes, but, said the *Eye* at the time, there was nothing to stop him standing again. Lo and behold, Parker has duly been put on the shortlist of Labour candidates for his old ward.

BRIBE? WHAT BRIBE?

HOUSEBUILDER Wimpey has come up with a brilliant idea to ease its planning application for 1,500 new homes in Kent. It is paying Tory Ashford borough council to hire three planning consultants at £400 a day for two days a week in order to "fast-track" the application over the course of a year – a total of about £120,000.

Wimpey's head of planning Paul Garber told Building Design magazine: "There is no conflict of interest at all. The local authority remains absolutely independent." And Ashford council's planning chief Richard Alderton said: "There is no way this is buying a planning decision. It's buying the ability of the local authority to deal with the case more quickly." Er, right. No doubt Wimpey will consider the money well spent, even in the very unlikely event of its planning application being turned down.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

WE'RE UP IN ARMS ABOUT THIS NEW PHONEMAST THEY'VE JUST ERECTED ON THE ROOF OF THE LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOL! THEY WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT! WE'LL FIGHT IT ALL THE WAY!
GOOD FOR YOU, GUYS! THINK OF THE HEALTH ISSUES AND THE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT
NEVER MIND THAT - IT'S NOT COMPATIBLE WITH OUR NETWORK!
THE WEAK SIGNAL IS MAKING OUR LIVES A MISERY!
SCHOOL

● THE e-Citizen National Project was launched last year with £2.5m to spend on encouraging people to use the £4bn-worth of "local e-government infrastructure". Its activities so far include setting up a website (www.e-citizen.gov.uk) where the latest update is still "website launched on 29th April 2005" – terrific work from an organisation supposedly committed to generating interest in using the web. It also commissioned research from MORI into whether people were aware that they could use the internet to contact their local council, pay council tax and so on. The upshot of which is that Local e-Government Minister Jim Fitzpatrick has now announced, er, a big new national project encouraging people to use local e-government. Only this time it has double the budget. The £5m "Lose the Queues" awareness campaign will launch next January.

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE listing of a building can never be an absolute prohibition of its destruction or mutilation, but it does imply a strong presumption against – and certainly that destruction should not be allowed without deliberation and consultation.

Odd, then, to find permission being given for the demolition of a building so soon after it was listed – as is the case of the Palace Cinema in Lord Street, Southport, Lancashire – listed grade II after English Heritage's survey of cinema buildings five years ago.

The listing notes that the Palace, which first opened in 1911, is "one of the earliest surviving purpose-built cinemas"; yet Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council has given permission for its replacement by a luxury "boutique" hotel.

The Palace was designed by George Tongue, who was brought back in 1929 to revamp and enlarge the interior. At the reopening the following year, the Palace was advertised as the most

handsome and comfortable cinema in the North of England. The interior has since been altered but remains of interest; the exterior remains unspoiled: a jolly Edwardian faience-clad façade. This adds much to what is Southport's glory – Lord Street, the long 88-feet wide avenue, lined with gardens and cast-iron and glass verandahs. Genteel Southport can probably do without a boutique hotel, which will tower over its neighbours, but it ought not to do without the Palace: a building which contributes much to the Victorian and early-20th century character of the town.

The new hotel for Warehouse Hotels Ltd is being promoted by a local entrepreneur and Sefton Council seems to have done a deal with English Heritage allowing the Palace to be sacrificed in favour of retaining the other listed cinema building in the town, the Grand Casino with its Deco interior, which is now a bingo hall. Such is planning.

The doughty Cinema Theatre Association, supported by the Ancient Monuments Society, has challenged this decision and is lobbying the Government Office for the North West to hold a public inquiry. The government office has so far declined and there seems to be no appeal against this decision. This will be the first loss of a listed cinema for 15 years. A scandal, surely.

A QUICK plug for the (free) exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum celebrating Thirty Years of Campaigning: SAVE Britain's Heritage 1975-2005.

SAVE was founded in European Architectural Heritage Year (in the first six months of which permission was given to demolish 182 listed buildings in England and Wales) and in response to the public interest generated by the Destruction of the Country House exhibition at the same museum.

Through its campaigns and reports, by working with enlightened engineers and architects and by mounting legal challenges, SAVE has saved many doomed buildings – The Grange, SFX Liverpool, Barlaston Hall, Calke Abbey and All Souls Haley Hill among them – and Britain would be an even worse place without SAVE.

It has focused attention too on the potential of unfashionable building types like Victorian textile mills and lunatic asylums; and many of its cases have figured in this column. More to the point, the exhibition's final photograph – of the sort of decent, serviceable terraced housing in the North that the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott wants to destroy – reminds us that SAVE is needed as much as it ever was.

TALKING of our beloved DPM, it is not just the North that is suffering from his blinkered adherence to destructive and outdated planning policies. Prescott also wants to cover the south-east with more and more houses and to promote the Thames Gateway development which, if realised, will see tens of thousands of people living without adequate services and in danger of flooding.

A measure of his department's skill is that it has just decided to allow the building of a 23,000-seater football stadium in Village Way, Falmer, Sussex, even though it means a huge overweening structure, with its attendant nuisances and traffic, will now rise in the Sussex Downs area of outstanding natural beauty.

Brighton 'n' Hove Albion FC had sold its old stadium in 1997 to make a killing, despite not having anywhere permanent to go to, which was a little foolish. The Falmer proposal was made in 2001 and opposed by Lewes District Council as well as by the unfortunate village. Well, too bad.

The DPM has also just decided to allow the building of a motorway service station, shops, a motel and parking for 700 cars on a nine-acre site on the south side of the M25 near Downside and Cobham in Surrey. The plan to build all this on green belt land was opposed by Elmbridge Borough Council and even the Transport Secretary accepted that it would have a huge environmental impact on Cobham and Downside. But the cars triumphed.

So while the Prime Minister damages Britain's security, reputation and way of life, his blustering deputy "Two Jags" puts the boot in, inflicting the physical damage on the landscape.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

One of our best-known artists, yet he risks his reputation championing something deeply anti-social...
HOCKNEY FUMES
I'LL SMOKE ALL I WANT, CHUM!
Painting watercolours!
Filthy habit!
Yuk!

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

AROUND this time of year Britain's orchestras are busy filing grievances to air at their annual post-Christmas conference; and one complaint you can expect to find high on the agenda is that traditional government indifference to their livelihoods seems to have matured into positive hostility.

Right now, they're under attack on all sides. The Inland Revenue has targeted them as easy prey, with a reprehensively opportunistic demand for £33m of National Insurance back-payments that no one expected – wiping out the benefit of the £35m Arts Council stabilisation grants the orchestras have received in recent years to keep them on the road, and facing several orchestras with the very real threat of bankruptcy.

As if that weren't enough, the otherwise inconsequential culture minister, David Lammy, has seized the chance to raise his political profile by adding a punch or two of his own. At a recent event for Black History Month, Lammy stood in front of an audience at the British Museum and made the not so veiled threat that if orchestras and other cultural institutions didn't increase the number of "black and ethnic minority workers" on their books, they'd find their funding cut. Which presumably means that orchestras, for the sake of political correctness, will be obliged to have a certain percentage of BMEs (as they have now officially become) on every concert platform, whether or not the said BMEs can actually play an instrument to an appropriate standard.

This would be dangerous talk if it weren't so vacuous and ill-informed. The truth is that British orchestras are profoundly concerned about the lack of BMEs, not only in their players but among their audiences too. They spend a disproportionate amount of their time and resources trying to remedy the problem. And in the process they get precious little help from Mr Lammy and his governmental friends who persistently fail to address the root cause of the problem: education.

If Lammy & co want to see black players in orchestras, all they have to do is ensure that black children get a proper grounding in classical music at school – as opposed to the politically correct sessions of rap and rock that pass for music education these days in the state sector. It's that simple.

QUESTION: How much can lawyers earn while winning their client £5,500 in a copyright dispute? Answer: Oh, around £758,000 if the lawyers happens to be the *Eye*'s old chums Carter Fuck, whose bill has now been received by classical record company Hyperion.

Hyperion faces the crippling costs bill following its appeal court defeat against academic Dr Lionel Sawkins (who claimed his work producing "performing editions" of several 18th century pieces gave him copyright in the works – see *Eye* 1133).

In a move that shocked the classical music industry, their lordships agreed. Dr Sawkins took home £5,500 and his lawyers are now demanding their crazy £758,000, of which half is "uplift" under a conditional fee arrangement (CFA). Hyperion can challenge the sum in the costs court, but that itself risks racking up yet more costs.

At Hyperion a number of planned recordings have now been put on hold because of the cash flow crisis, including works by Edmund Rubbra, Ronald Stevenson and Malcolm Williamson. Hyperion director Simon Perry says all money donated to their legal costs appeal fund will be put towards resurrecting the recording projects. Donations can be made online via www.hyperion-records.co.uk or by writing to Hyperion Appeal Fund, PO Box 25, London SE9 1AX.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Lookalike

David Davis

Joe Lieberman

Sir,

Perhaps David Davis will take losing the impending Tory leadership election gracefully, given that he has had plenty of experience at losing elections when he ran as running mate with Al Gore in 2000?

Keep it up,
COLIN HOAD,

Via email.

Free David Trimble

Sir,

I have just read, with some dismay, that David Trimble is to be given a peerage. My dismay stems from the fact that he has managed this without spending so much as one penny! Why should he (and, I suspect, one or two others) get a seat in the House of Lords for nothing? Numerous good folk have had to pay many thousands for their piece of the action. I have been saving hard in the hope that one day I would be able to afford an honour of one sort or the other but now I'm left wondering why I bothered. Somebody should look into this honours for nothing scandal before every politician wants one for free.

Yours etc,
NEIL WRIGHT,

Via email.

All adds up

Sir,

I trust I shall not be the only person pedantic enough to point out that the first barb from your Dumb Britain feature (1145) is aimed incorrectly. Since multiplication is, by definition, a function of repeated addition, the Radio Mercury presenter who commented on the contestant's "good addition" was – knowingly or otherwise – quite correct.

Additionally yours,
COLIN WILLIAMS,

Reading.

On probation

Sir,

Will you please stop acting as mouthpiece for NAPO (the probation officers' union)? In Eye 1145 you bemoan the fact that "private security companies will be writing the court reports that recommend jail sentences from which they could benefit because they also happen to run the jails". Probation officers have been writing the court reports that recommend probation orders for nearly 100 years with a comparable vested interest. Sad old fart that I am, I've counted 21 occasions since 2002 when you've acted as Pravda to their Stalin, with nary a challenge to their highly selective world-view.

PROF. KEN PEASE,

Loughborough University.

Starfish enterprise

Sir,

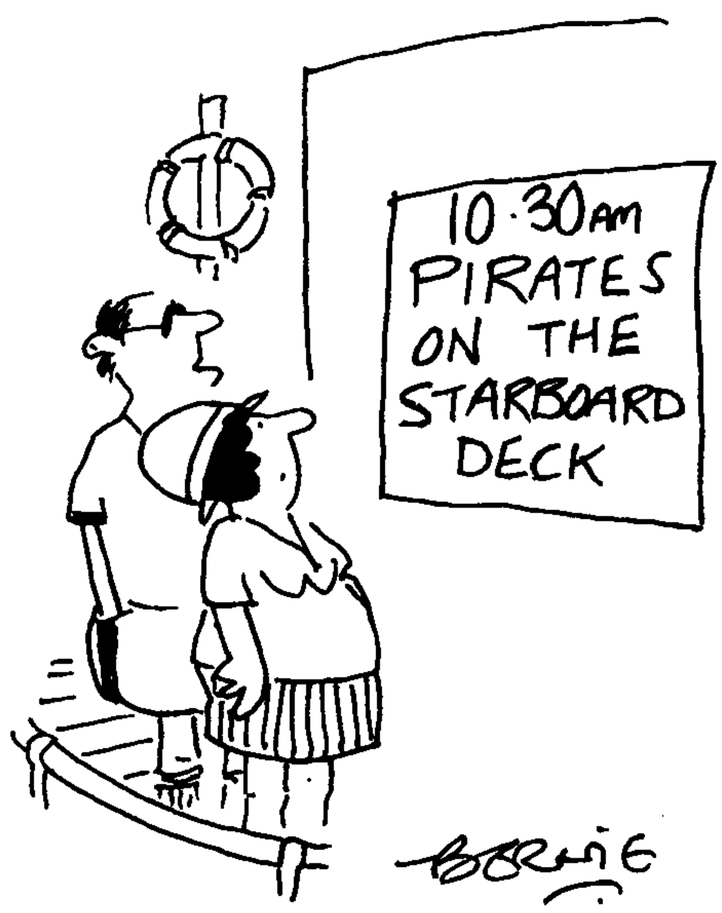
I note your article Twin-Trickery (In the Back, 1143) mentioning the "new-fangled sewage treatment system" being pushed by the locals, as an alternative to the sewage proposal of Southern Water for the Brighton-Hove-Peacehaven area.

Then there follows a letter (Eye 1144 "In the shit") which states that for Peacehaven and everywhere else, there is no such thing as a sewage works in a water-tight box that sits on the sea bed.

Well, it does exist. It is called a Starfish sewage treatment works and is well known in the area. Starfish is the result of bringing together the accumulated skills and expertise of the world's best engineering companies with long experience in marine construction, the water sector and environmental issues. It's a thoroughly doable, bank-able and insurable proposal. It is exactly what Brighton Hove and Peacehaven need.

GERALD CLARK,

Kaiak Ltd Starfish.



"Surely that should say 'Pilates'...?"

Chorus of disapproval

Sir,

Please cancel my subscription forthwith; I do not want to receive any further copies of Private Eye.

I have cancelled my direct debit.

This course of action has been prompted by your totally heartless and tasteless article on John Peel in issue 1144.

CHRIS BUSSELL,

Via email.

SOLUTIONS

"M&S presents Perfect Christmas shopping solutions" – *Christmas shopping*

"Gift Solutions at John Lewis" – *gifts*

"Integrated Document Solutions" – *archive storage*

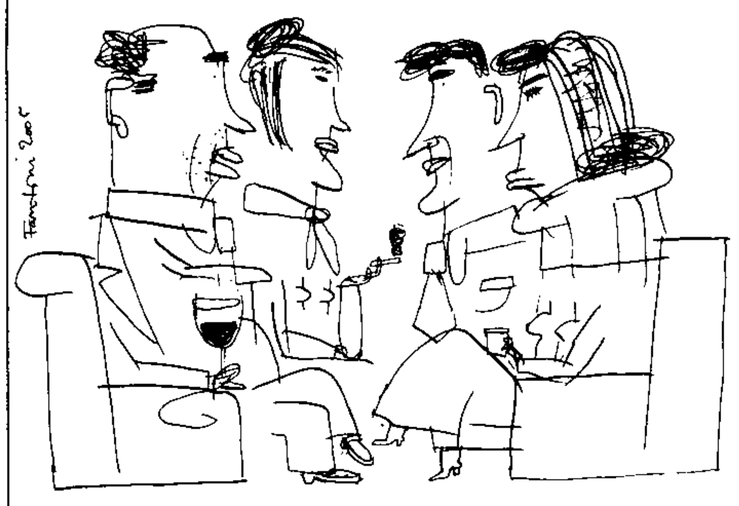
"Colchester Mortgage Solutions" – *mortgages*

"Pancode Door Phone Solutions" – *door phones*

"Tate & Lyle Food and Beverage Solutions" – *sugar*

All submitted by readers

Scenes You Seldom See



"Any chance of seeing the video of your daughter's christening again before we go?"

Gardening leave

Sir,

It is very flattering to have a whole column devoted to the Chiswick House and Gardens regeneration project (Nooks and Corners, last Eye). It is also very heartening that Chiswick is recognised as one of the country's most celebrated historic estates. However I would like to set the record straight on a number of issues.

Firstly, the £12m bid submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in October is to restore these historically significant gardens for the benefit of the local community, NOT to build a new facility building and interpretation centre next to Chiswick House.

As with public parks nationally, Chiswick has suffered from 20 years of decline and once restored, we must ensure that it has a sustainable future. Hospitality, which includes weddings and other charging events such as the opera, will be important sources of income.

There are a number of walled spaces in the gardens. Of the three main spaces behind the conservatory, the first would be renovated for horticultural and educational use, the second would be retained as a sports facility for local use and the northernmost area furthest from the house would be used as an occasional events car park. It's worth adding that the car park would also be used for a wide range of other events such as art, craft or plant sales. If successful, the HLF bid will also fund the restoration of the conservatory, the landscaped gardens around the house and the many historic features contained within them.

Yours faithfully,
MARTIN CLAYTON,

Project Director, on behalf of the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust.

Lookalike

Data

David Cameron

Sir,

While watching Star Trek: the Next Generation on DVD I was shocked by the chilling similarity of the intergalactic android Data to prospective Tory leader David Cameron. Is there a message in this about the future face of politics?

Yours worryingly,
GIUSEPPE ALBANO,

Via email.

Foot and Hanratty: You write...

Sir,

How touching is the faith of John Webster and Rob Johnston (Eye 1145) in British justice and the infallibility of medical science.

But, as the late Paul Foot himself wrote after the dismissal of the last Hanratty appeal in May 2002: "Even a lord justice of appeal can work out that if you are in Rhyl, you cannot commit a murder near Bedford."

No fewer than 11 disinterested witnesses swore that James Hanratty was in Rhyl on 22 August 1961, the night of the murder of Michael Gregsten. Was every one of these people a liar – and if so, why would they lie to protect a murderer? All the DNA testing in the world cannot explain that one away.

DAVID CUFFLEY,

Norwich.

... I feel I must write in response to the letters in Eye 1145 relating to the Paul Foot awards and his Hanratty campaign. Firstly, Dr Rob Johnston must accept the fact that Roy Meadows stood up in a court of law and misled juries with his inaccurate statistics. If we still had the gallows, these innocent ladies could have hanged on this evidence.

Secondly, while Mr Foot's Hanratty campaign ultimately was wrong, his concerns were also with the expedient way justice was done. The crime was committed on 22 August 1961 and he was hanged just seven months later on 4 April 1962. His continued focus on the case shows us that the short timespan between conviction and execution didn't allow for a thorough enough appeal process. Had the authorities not been so quick to execute him, the questions about alleged alibis in Rhyl and the gun hidden on the bus would have been answered.

Please refrain from speaking ill of the dead, especially when they were right most of the time.

Yours sincerely,

SEAN CONNOLLY,

Via email.

...Webster endeavours to make out that Foot, though a very good journalist, was a bit of a crank when it came to Hanratty and has deliberately insulted the victims by being so needlessly stubborn. Johnston, meanwhile, has been allowed space for a nauseating and stupid attack on one of the finest, bravest and most honourable journalists in British history.

For those who don't know Foot's position on Hanratty – mirroring the kind of independence of mind and doggedness which led Foot to help overturn many miscarriages of justice – here goes. Given that there are witnesses who place Hanratty many miles away from the scene of the crime at the time of the crime, one is naturally inclined to believe that maybe, just maybe, he's not guilty. All the DNA evidence in the world can't change that physical fact. The DNA evidence may well have been contaminated over the decades. Yes, Foot didn't do himself any favours by being so publicly dismissive of the scientific evidence, something his detractors (political foes masquerading as journalistic watchdogs) lunge for to slur him with.

But that does not take away from what looks like a solid alibi. Crucial, almost certainly pivotal, evidence was also withheld from Hanratty's defence team. So much so that Hanratty would almost certainly have been cleared at the time. That's Foot's position on the matter. I'd be amazed if anyone believes it to be unreasonable

T CHAHBOUNE,

Via email.

LUVVIES

"When you are putting together a show, it's like being in wartime. There's a unity."

"I want you [her dancers] to inspire them [the audience] to be a better version of what they are already'."

MADONNA on bbc.co.uk

Submitted by Garnet Roach.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

I was saddened to see that the editor of the Sun had been arrested because of a domestic "row". This is further evidence of the decline of the moral tone of the nation. Perhaps you have a photograph of a newspaper editor enjoying better relations with their partner, to remind us of the way things used to be?

Regards,

ANDY HARRIS,

San Carlos, California.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"They've put their heads above the precipice."

MARGARET GILMORE, BBC
(Jeremy Kilner)

"The game is in a neutral country, for both teams."

DAVID BECKHAM, Radio 5 Live
(Mick Tully)

"At the end of the day, you have got to have the balls to be feminine."

SUSANNAH CONSTANTINE, BBC1
(Martin Dignan)

"They [Fulham] out-thought us mentally, and physically..."

STUART PEARCE, Sky sports News
(M. Elmore)

"If he opens his legs, he'll be hard to handle."

GRAHAM TAYLOR, Radio 5 Live
(David Knight)

Heart of the matter

Sir,

The important question posed by MD (1143) is predicated on the assumption that angioplasty, a less invasive procedure, is as effective as conventional bypass surgery, in relieving symptoms and improving life expectancy, in patients with significant coronary heart disease. But it is not.

This fallacy arose on the basis of 15 trials of angioplasty versus surgery (many financed by industry) which showed that although surgery was far superior in curing symptoms, it did not apparently increase survival. However, in the British Medical Journal (BMJ 2 April 2005), I explained that the seemingly equivalent efficacy of angioplasty in comparison to surgery, with respect to survival, was "manufactured" by only including particularly low risk patients (around 4 percent of all patients), whose survival, therefore, would be excellent with any treatment (including drugs). By excluding patients with more severe disease, ie those known to have the most survival benefit from surgery, the trials were, in effect, inherently biased against operation.

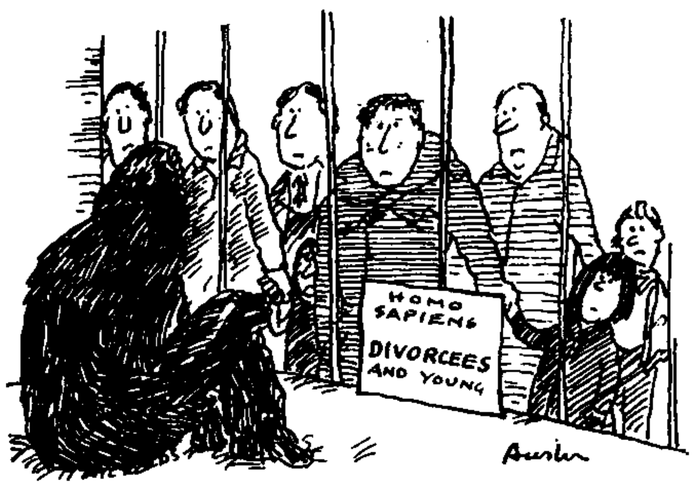
Nevertheless, these trials are increasingly used to justify angioplasty in all patients even though the best evidence continues to consistently, and strongly, favour surgery. For example, in a recent study of around 60,000 risk-matched patients, those treated with angioplasty were almost three times more likely to die within three years than those treated with surgery (New England Journal of Medicine, 26 May 2005).

Regrettably, however, evidence-based medicine seems increasingly irrelevant in the face of a multi-billion dollar industry. As indicated by MD, some cardiologists now solely decide a patient's treatment rather than discuss it with colleagues including a surgeon. As I wrote in the BMJ, failure to involve a multidisciplinary team ensures that the patient is unlikely to be offered the best advice and, consequently, falls far short of best practice.

DAVID P. TAGGART MD (HONS) PHD FRCS,

Professor of Cardiovascular Surgery, University of Oxford.

DAVID AUSTIN 1935-2005



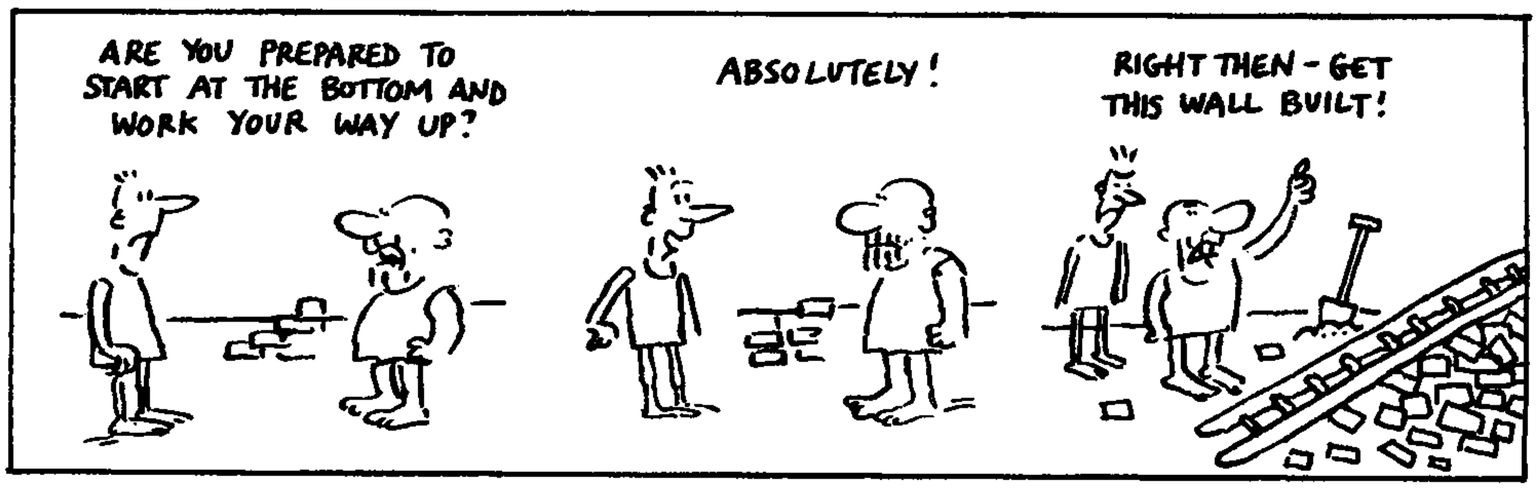
DAVID AUSTIN, who has died aged 70, was an *Eye* stalwart for 35 years. I was fortunate to share an office with David for the past 15 years – and was constantly entertained by his grumpy good humour and encyclopaedic knowledge. A self-taught artist, his engagingly amateurish drawing style belied the sharpness of his ideas. David's pocket cartoons would make a piercing point with a laugh-out-loud gag, while his strips – particularly Hom Sap, which has run continuously since 1970, never failed. David loved drawing and loved work – this, his last Hom Sap, was delivered from his hospital bed when he was desperately ill. It is perhaps fitting that the *Eye*, which helped launch his career, should publish his final joke.

I shall miss his company and wisdom – and like all his fans – the laughs.

Nick Newman

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Letter from **Valletta**

from Our Own Correspondent

NOT since the Germans tried to bomb us into the Med has our island paradise enjoyed such international attention. This month Malta plays host to the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and preparations are going well.

We received intelligence of assassination plots and terrorist conspiracies, so we've called out the entire army reserve. Those 35 plucky part-timers will sort out al-Qa'eda all right. Some 266 police officers are detailed to provide motorbike-outriders for our most esteemed guests even though, until a few days ago, we still only had 30 bikes. At least they will have some nice roads along which to travel, thanks to emergency resurfacing work that sensibly extends no further than the routes the VIPs will take.

Most members of the Commonwealth are from Africa. The warm welcome we shall extend their leaders contrasts somewhat to the treatment their compatriots have been receiving here in recent months. Ours is a country founded and fortified by Christian knights as a forward base against the dusky hordes during the crusades. Again, say increasing numbers of our politicians, we are on the frontline in the conflict between good and evil.

In fact we face a genuine crisis for which we are ill-equipped. With a constant stream of refugees and economic migrants leaving Libya (unhindered by the Libyan authorities, relieved to see them depart), our detention centres are bursting at the barbed-wire seams. The strain on our brave armed forces began to show in January. Detainees from the Hal-Safi detention centre held a sit-down protest at their year-long detention without interview. In clear view of the media, soldiers in riot gear then beat them to a pulp.

A visiting UN official for refugees, Michele Manca di Nissa, expressed horror at what he saw, but our politicians kept quiet lest they upset our soldiers and members of their families of voting age. With Malta perpetually split 50/50 between the ruling Nationalist Party and the opposition Malta Labour Party, single-seat majorities and permanent political stalemate are our norm.

Some fairly fruity voices, out of tune with the Commonwealth's rainbow idyll of racial tolerance, have emerged in the vacuum. First came Imperium Europa, a party claiming to be "racialist but not racist". Led by Norman Lowell it advocates shooting African migrants at sea before they reach our beaches. Slightly less extreme, but equally sinister, is the Alleanza Nazzjonali Repubblikana. Its president, Philip Beattie, proposes the use of chain gangs on our streets. The ANR's self-styled "Defend Your Country" march through Valletta in October was well attended and included scuffles with anti-nazi groups.

Other public figures have joined the chorus against the silent invasion. General Worker's Union president Salvu Sammut says immigrants are stealing our jobs and to blame for "undetected diseases spreading through our population". He argues that we must consider urgent action that may not necessarily be "just or humane".

Where the fringes tread, so the mainstream follows. Alfred Sant, leader of the opposition Malta Labour Party, believes the national interest is more important than human rights. Dr Sant lost elections in 1996 and 2003, and led the failed campaign against EU accession in 2002. But he hopes popular frustration with a discredited government and a stagnant economy could help him into power in 2008: the once proud Nationalist Party, led by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, has now become as corrupt and dictatorial as its Labour predecessor.

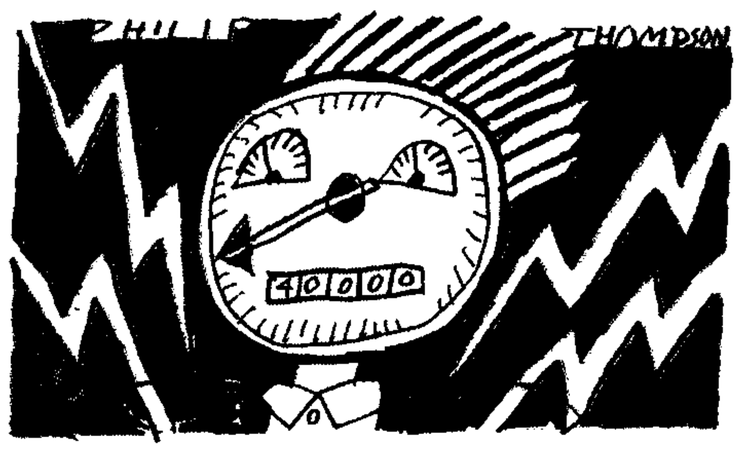
Both parties rely on undeclared cash donations from the powerful construction industry to fund their propaganda apparatus, including their own newspapers and TV stations. Meanwhile, our institutionally-corrupt Planning Authority continues to dish out development permits. What little remains of our traditional rural and coastal landscape is fast disappearing under concrete. Could anywhere be more suitable to host something as pointless and anachronistic as the CHOGM than Malta?

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "My philosophy of life is that there are no problems, only opportunities," George Bryant told reporters in his motor-cycle workshop in Toowoomba, Queensland. "So when I got bowel cancer and had a colostomy bag fitted, I tried to turn events to my advantage. While convalescing on the ward, I noticed how everyone's bags swelled up at different rates, depending on what they'd been eating, and that red meat makes the bag swell much more than other foods. That's when I first began to wonder if it would be possible to power a motorcycle entirely on my own flatus.

"Luckily, I am a motor fitter by trade, so I understood the mechanics quite well. I used a small weed-eater mower fitted to a moped, and experimented with adjusting the fuel system to a smaller jet, and retarding the timing. Then I made an airtight seal between



my colostomy bag and the fuel supply pipe, and after four attempts I got it running smoothly. My motorcycle is based on pure scientific principles, and is not at all ridiculous, as some say. I always have a big meat meal before I set off on a long journey, and take a container of beef jerky, salami, and kabana with me, in case I get stuck in heavy traffic and need extra fuel to get home. Some people find it disgusting, but to me, it's the perfect eco-friendly form of transport." *(Moped Army News, 27/5/05. Spotter: Bill Akhurst)*

– ● –

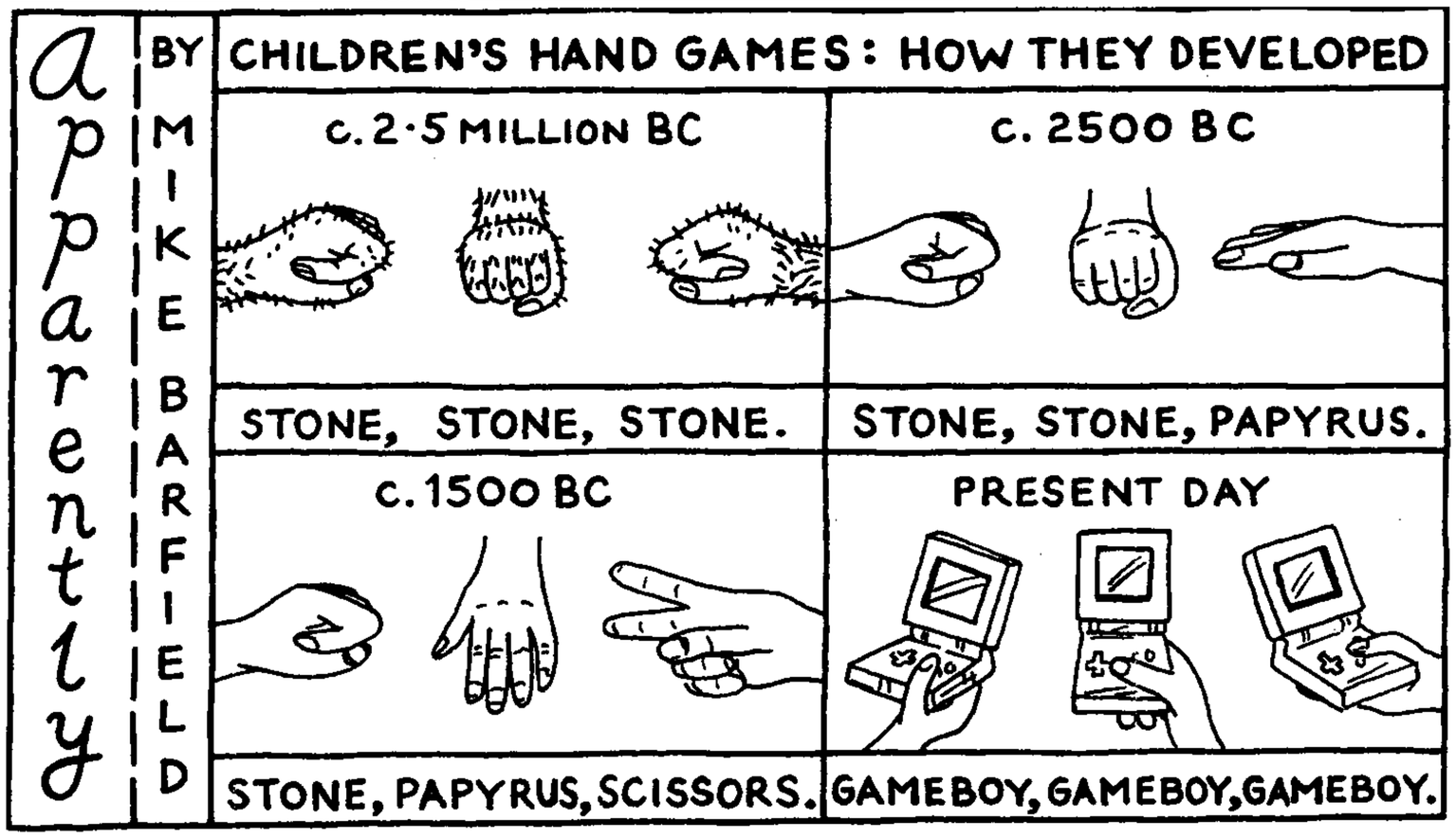
● *"It sounded like a firecracker," Frank Clewer told a press conference in the town of Warrnambool in Victoria, "and at first I had no idea that it was coming from me. But within five minutes of me entering the Karingal building for my job interview, the carpet had started to erupt in flames, the fire alarm went off, and we all had to evacuate the premises. I went back to my car, but as soon as I sat down, I noticed that the plastic on the seat and floor was starting to scorch, so I approached one of the firefighters for help. He tested my clothes with a static electricity field meter, and told me in amazement that it was measuring the current at 40,000 volts."*

Fire officer Henry Barton added that "when we entered the building, there were smouldering scorch marks in the carpet, and we could hear a cracking noise like a whip. When we talked to Mr Clewer, he told us he'd bought his nylon jacket and woollen shirt especially for the job interview, and that this was the first time he'd worn them together. Static electricity is caused by charged surfaces rubbing against each other and storing energy, until a spark generated by dry air causes it to suddenly discharge. It's a bit like lightning really. 40,000 volts is almost high enough to cause spontaneous combustion, which means his clothes would have self-ignited, with him inside them. He's a lucky man." (Warrnambool Standard, 16/9/05. Spotter: Tigre1963)

– ● –

● "I am sixty-four years old, and I don't shock easily," Cherrill Granger told reporters in Rotorua, New Zealand, "but I found it creepy, and in very poor taste indeed. I'd just come out of the Ngongotaha Cemetery after visiting a friend's grave, and I got the shock of my life when I saw the Grim Reaper standing outside, sickle in hand, silently watching the cars go by. I know it's supposed to slow down the traffic, but my daughter told me she saw him yesterday when she was out driving, and was so terrified she almost crashed the car. So how is that going to make the roads any safer?"

However, Sergeant Brent Crowe of the Rotorua Police Strategic Traffic Unit was unrepentant about the campaign, which has hired several actors to dress as Grim Reapers and position themselves near accident blackspots. "It may seem a macabre way to get a message across, but sometimes we need to use tactics that are emotional. The tactic here is to shock speeding drivers into slowing down by making them think about death. Then, a hundred metres further along the road, they'll pass a police car with a screen displaying the speed they were travelling. Some people may not like it, but guess what? I don't like picking up dead bodies off the road, and if this reduces the number of fatal accidents, it's okay by me." *(Rotorua Daily Post, 30/9/05. Spotter: Phil Bond)*



ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

You all know the phrase "more in sorrow than anger"?

Well, I'm writing to you this week more in anger than in sorrow!

And you don't have to have a GCSE Grade A* in rocket science to know why!

When I recently asked the congregation to give its views on Mr Clarke's new Neighbourhood Watch plans for the parish, you collectively chose to reject them.

Now, don't get me wrong! You are of course fully entitled to do that. There's no law against it (or not yet, although Mr Clarke tells me he's working on it!).

But I'm equally entitled to feel a little bit aggrieved that you've all chosen to disagree with me, even though I'm right!

Can I quote some words of scripture here, because I think you'll agree that they are pretty relevant to the situation here in St Albion's.

"It is a far, far better thing to do the right thing and lose, than to do the wrong thing and be on the winning side." *(Temptations of St Anthony, 7.4)*.

But we don't have to get all heavy with scripture (which was written a long time ago, and we've all moved on from that, haven't we?) to see the point on this one.

I am sure you all remember that great film *Twelve Angry Men*, starring Jane Fonda's father.

And do you remember that, to begin with, there's only one man who is right, and all the others are completely wrong, thanks to their prejudice and stupidity!

But the hero of the film (played by Tony Fonda) refuses to back down, because he just knows that he's right!

And gradually, one by one, they all come round to his point of view and plead with him, with tears in their eyes,

to stay on as vicar!

Then they all gather round the Christmas tree and sing "For He's a Jolly Good Vicar"! Isn't that a wonderful ending – and one "That I think has got a message for all of us (or should I say, for all of you?).

And this brings me to my third point, which was that it wasn't only me who was right about the Neighbourhood Watch. I know every member of the PCC received a personal letter from our local chief policeman, Inspector Blair (no relation), asking them to support me.

I've even got a copy of his letter here which I am printing in full below, just in case any of you think I am making it up!

Dear PCC Member,

I am writing to you personally on a very important matter. The vicar has asked me to do this in my capacity as the most senior policeman in St Albion's and as a completely independent expert on why you should support the vicar's proposals that your policemen should have the power to lock everyone up in order to find out who they are and whether they have done anything wrong.

Yours sincerely

Inspector I. Blair MA (Oxon).

PS As you can see from the envelope, I know where you live! You see, we policemen aren't all thick plods, as you snobby middle-class people seem to think!

So, there you have it, from a totally independent source – proof that I am right and everyone not called Blair is wrong!

Yours,

Tony

Scenes from Parish Life

No 94: The Mugging of the Vicar!

By local artist Mr de la Nougerede

Kookery Korner

with the Rev. Dubya of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons

This week: ***Shake 'n' Bake***

1. Take one tub of best quality Texan plain white phosphorus.

2. Shake well, serve up and just watch 'em bake!

This is an old Southern recipe passed on to me by a good friend of the Bush family, old Ma Cheney! As she likes to say, "It was a favourite for the nigras, and now it goes down just as well with Iraquoons!"

Women's Groups

Our thanks to the vicar's wife, who gave us yet another of her fascinating talks, this time on "the benefits of a university education". Mrs Blair told us that if she hadn't been lucky enough to go to a university, she might well have ended up as nothing more than "a dreary little shop girl". How we all laughed at the thought of the First lady of the Parish standing behind a counter selling things, instead of standing in front of it and being given them all for free!

Mrs Blair then graciously took questions from the audience, and inevitably was asked about the success of her fascinating book "Life Behind The Scenes at The Vicarage". Mrs Blair emphasised that she had never taken advantage of her position as the vicar's wife, except when she had!

Refreshments were provided by Mrs Blears, who because it was still Ramadan, handed everyone an empty plate!

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

I was rudely asked recently to attend a PCC sub-committee meeting looking into the way the parish is run. I have no intention of being quizzed about my activities by a lot of ignorant parishioners. A very important person like myself has more pressing things to do, such as looking out of the window to see if the sky is still blue.

Yours far too busy to write letters,
J. Birt,
Attic Flat,
The Vicarage.

The Editor writes: Letters from Mr Birt will not be cut due to his being a personal friend of the Vicar.

Dear Sir,

I am totally disgustivated by Mr Christopher Meyer's dis-called for remarks about the Vicar and indeed myself in his new so-called book. What a toffee-nosed prat!

To suggestify that I cannot even excess myself properly is completely pretosteros.... presumpterous... prosperitous... fooking wrong!

Yours,
J. Prescott,
C/o Working Men's Club.

Maily Telegraph

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING QUALITY DAILY FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2005

Ex-Telegraph proprietor on multi-million pound fraud charge

By Our Media Staff
Phil Job

LORD BLACK of Alcatraz was last night charged with the biggest theft in history having stolen billions and billions of pounds to maintain his lavish lifestyle which included the following incredible items:

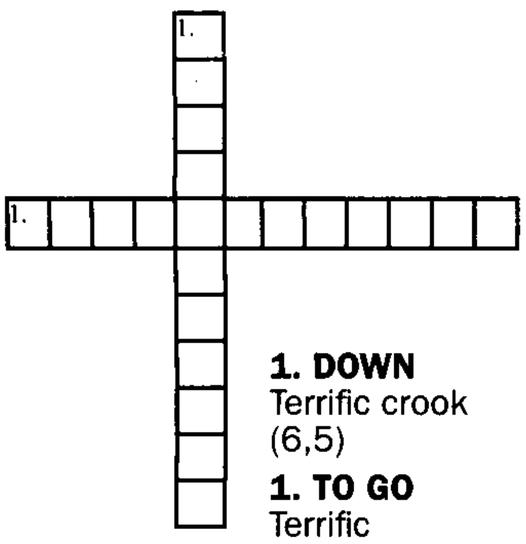
- **A fleet of personalised jets (£89bn)**
- **A penthouse on the moon (£173bn)**
- **Napoleon's original toothbrush – as used at the Battle of Austerlitz (£278bn)**
- **The world's most expensive wife (£1233bn)**
- **The world's most terrible newspaper (65p – free on Eurostar)**

Lord Black of Alcatraz was, however, unrepentant. Speaking from his 147-bedroom Toronto hideaway he told reporters, "I am completely innocent. They can send me to St Helena if they like but I will be back. And this time I will win."

Full story: Not in paper due to embarrassment of all concerned.

Conrad Black denies wasting shareholders' money on frivolous items

VERY QUICK TELEGRAPH CROSSWORD



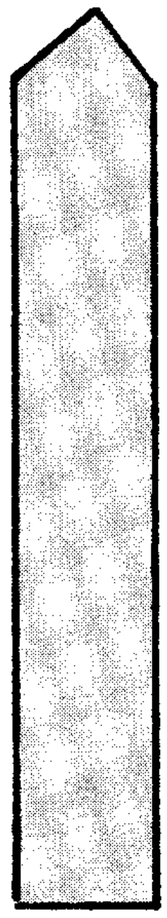
1. DOWN
Terrific crook (6,5)

1. TO GO
Terrific crook's wife (7,5)

Winner becomes new editor.

Sales Of Telegraph Soar To New Low!

FOR the fourth month running Telegraph sales have rocketed down to a record 94 copies. Why don't you join the throng of thousands of readers who are deserting the Telegraph and buying the real Daily Mail instead. (Is this right? Marketing Dept.)



EXCITING NEW MAILY TELEGRAPH POD-CAST!
Download the Best of Simon Heffer's trenchant views on why David Davis should be Tory leader

Telegraph editor throws in towel – 'I can't stand it anymore'

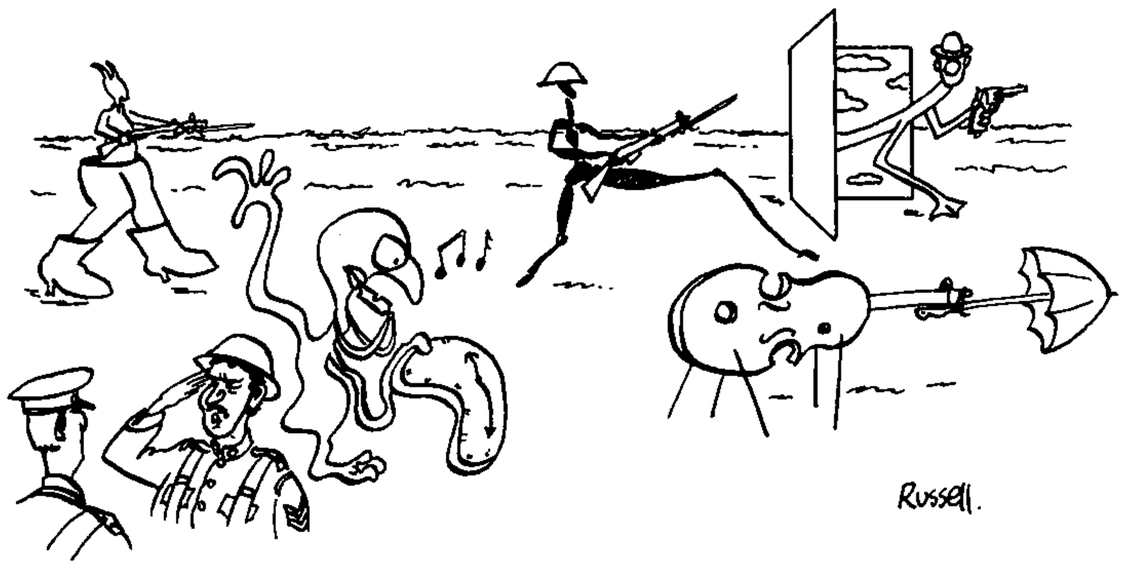
By Our Media Staff
Phil Job

MR MARTIN Newboy, the 25-year-old editor of the Maily Telegraph last night suddenly resigned to the amazement of nobody except the men at the Telegraph. Said one marketing man "We had no idea he was the editor. We just told him what to put in. Newboy will be sadly missed but not for long since he is going to be replaced by a computer – just like the crossword compiler."

Full story: Not in paper due to further embarrassment of all concerned.

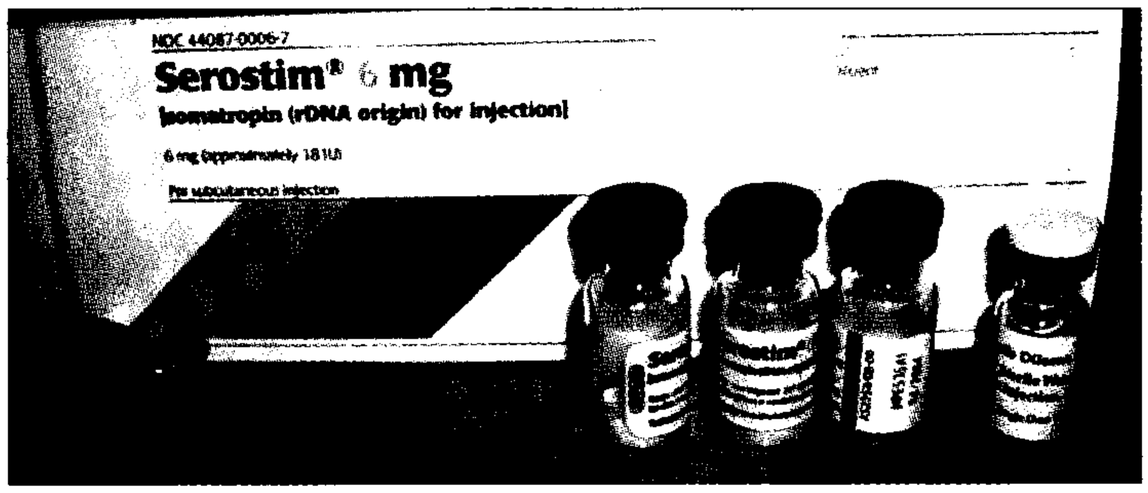
MATT

"At last, something worth reading in the Maily Telegraph!"



"Sir, the Surrealist Artist Rifles are going over the top"

CHINA UNVEILS MASCOTS FOR THE 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES



'WE DID USE WHITEWASH BUT IT'S HARMLESS' says Reid

by Our Military Staff *W.M.Deedes*

THE BRITISH Government today admitted that, contrary to its earlier denials, whitewash had been widely used in Iraq.

However the Defence Secretary Dr Reid was quick to point out that the use of whitewash does not breach any international rules, and is not mentioned in the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1368.

Whitewashphorous

Asked why he had previously claimed that Britain had never used whitewash in Iraq, Dr Reid explained that he had been using the word "no" in its affirmative sense, and that anyway his remarks had been taken out of context.

"We only used whitewash", he went on, "against civilians, to protect ministers. This is a perfectly legitimate and beneficial use of the substance in a military context."

A Paler Shade of Whitewash

Whitewash was most recently used in the battles of Hutton and Butler, when the government came under heavy fire from backbench insurgents, and needed large amounts of whitewash to escape.

WHITEWASH How It Works

WHITEWASH (*or Blairium toxicum, to give it its proper chemical name*) is commonly used to eliminate opposition and to cover up errors.

It eats away at the oxygen of publicity, consuming all damaging evidence and leaves the public stumbling about in a fog of confusion.

Once whitewash has been applied, it is almost impossible to remove, and often continues its deadly work for years.

The only known antidote to this horrific substance is telling the truth, but this has not yet been discovered by governments.

"You're right, there is a terrible draught coming from somewhere"

THE EYE WELCOMES A GALAXY OF NEW COLUMNISTS!

For years the Eye has had no columns written by MPs. From next issue, every column will be written by a world famous MP, at a minimum salary of £10 million a year.

Here's what you will read

William Hague MP: Binge drinkers? Know what I'd do? String 'em up and throw away the key. I blame Blair.

Anne Widdecombe MP: Binge drinkers? Know what I'd do? String 'em up and throw away the key. I blame the CofE.

George Galloway MP: Binge drinkers? Can't be Muslims then. Hats off to my voters. I blame Blair.

David Blunkett MP *(formerly minister for WLTM)*: Would you like to have my babies?

(That's enough overpaid MP columnists. Ed)

THE HASBEANO
FEATURING BORIS THE MENACE
Cripes, readers! Mr Brillo says I'm not going to edit The Beano any more!!!!
Well he's wrong there!
'Cos I NEVER did! Snigger! Snigger!
COMMONS
TELLY
LEGOVER
How dare that oik Davis call me a toff!!
I'm going to give him a damn good thrashing!
On second thoughts, I'll get my fag Gove to do it for me!
BIFF!
TIMES

Introducing

EYE TOAST

FREE with today's Private Eye and every Tuesday – all the latest goings-on in the exciting world of toast.

- **The Russian Toast Billionaires** 3
- **How Toast can make you live longer** 7
- **Madonna on "My First Piece of Toast"** 23
- **Toronto is the toast of Toast** 37

STORM GROWS OVER AMBASSADOR'S SHOCK MEMOIRS

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

HUNDREDS of ministers and top civil servants last night queued up to attack the former ambassador to Washington for his "appalling breach of confidentiality, his failure to observe Civil Service guidelines and his outrageous betrayal of his colleagues."

Jack Straw led the way saying "It is not his description of me as a useless and pathetic little twerp that I object to, but Sir Christopher's portrayal of John Major wearing his underpants in bed was an affront to all civil values".

Said Lord Butler, the former head of the Civil Service, "it is a scandal that Sir Christopher should have been allowed to make all this money out of his memoirs, I could have done that if I'd thought of it first, instead of having to spend my time chairing inquiries and finding the prime minister innocent of all charges".

Lord Armstrong of Illrepute added his distinguished voice to the growing chorus of obloquy: "if Senior Civil Servants are now allowed to cash in on their indiscretions, then I can only say I wish they had told me about it earlier, when I could still remember who I was".

No one was more angry than Mr Alastair Campbell, who commented, "We've all written diaries about what a dickhead Blair is, but some of us have the decency to wait until he's out of office before filling our boots. Meanwhile, there are still tickets available for my one-man show, Why Blair's A Dickhead, opening this January at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford."

'Why is his wife so fruity?' Critics demand to know

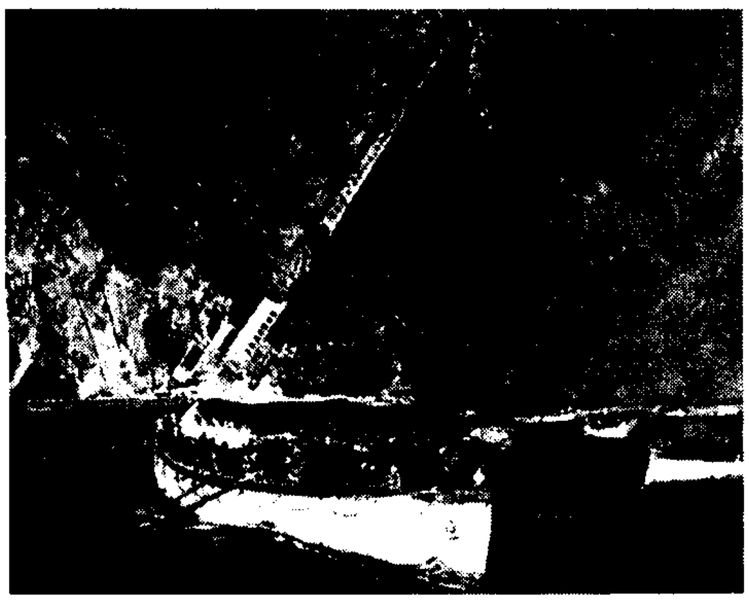
TITANIC LATEST – CAPTAIN HAS FULL SUPPORT

by Our Shipping Staff JON SNOW AND SIR TIM ICE

THE OFFICERS and crew of the SS Titanic last night rallied behind their captain, as the ship began to sink slowly beneath the waves.

All were quick to praise Captain Blair's navigational skills, despite the setbacks of recent days.

Particularly fulsome in her praise of Captain Blair's leadership was Chief Petty Officer Patricia Hewitt, who said, "we're not changing course just because we've hit an iceberg…gurgle… gurgle…"



The captain himself issued a statement from the bridge – "It is better to be right and sink than…gurgle… gurgle…"

Full story and pictures: pages 2-24.

"NOW you're entitled to use the disabled badge"

BATTLE OF THE TWO DAVIDS

WHAT is it that divides the two contenders for the Conservative Party leadership?

Private Eye has invited these two titans of the political scene to take part in a head-to-head confrontation that forces them to define themselves in terms of modern Britain.

Q1. Belt or braces?
Cameron: *belt*. Davis: *braces*

Q2. Ant or Dec?
Cameron: *Ant*. Davis: *Dec*.

Q3. One lump or two?
Cameron: *Two*. Davis: *Two*.

Q4. Arsenal or Man U?
Cameron: *Chelsea*. Davis: *Millwall*.

Q5. Rain or shine?
Cameron: *Shine*. Davis: *Shine*.

Q6. Medium or rare?
Cameron: *Medium-rare*. Davis: *Rare-medium*.

Q7. Red or white?
Cameron: *Rosé*. Davis: *Blue*.

Q8. Holly or ivy?
Cameron: *The Ivy*. Davis: *Hollyday Inn*.

Q9. Stone or scissors?
Cameron: *Paper*. Davis: *Bugger*.

Q10. Cocaine or marijuana?
Cameron: *I've made it clear that I am not going to comment on anything which may or may not have happened in the past*. Davis: *Ha, ha, ha*.

You can download this interview on your ipod, with a commentary by Simon Heffer, on www.privateeyepod.con.uk

GLENDA SLAGG
THE EYE'S POLITICAL EDITOR!

■ **HATS OFF to Doreen Davis!? She's the stay-at-home missus of Dishy Dave, the future Tory Prime Minister!?! At last, here's a gal who's not afraid to look after the kiddies and make sure there's a nice hot meal for hubby when he comes home from work!?! Call me old-fashioned, but I say Doreen is the role model for the future!?**

■ DOREEN DAVIS!?! Doormat Davis, more like!?! How can a woman in the 21st century expect to be taken seriously when all *she does is look after* the kids and make a nice hot meal for hubby when he comes home from work?!? You should be ashamed of yourself, Doreen?!? Your attitude is as old-fashioned as your silly name!?!!

Glenda Slagg

Mary Ann Bighead

Around the world in 80 columns

Dateline: Mexico

Today is the Day of the Dead Clever where primitive Mexicans celebrate the power of incredibly bright people in an elaborate festival of pagan symbolism and religious ritual.

In the small village of La Cabeza Grande, where the Bighead family are staying, the locals appear to be worshipping the enormous garishly painted head of an immensely intelligent female, one with beautiful long hair and two very clever children.

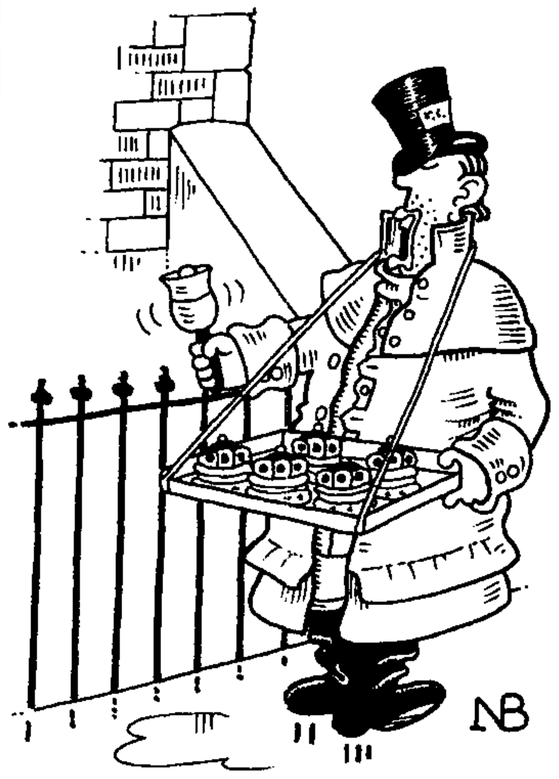
When I ask in my fluent Xoxocatalan dialect (very like 11th century Persian as it happens) "Who is this extraordinary woman?" to my embarrassment they all fall to their knees crying, "It is you, Senora Bighead, with your infantos Brainella y Intelligencia!!"

When we return from the Mayan temple to our hotel rooms to have a family evening reading Proust (backwards!) we all agree on what we have learnt. That it is humbling to find, even in a tiny little backwater in the outer reaches of the Mayan civilisation, that ordinary peasants still have a deep-seated respect for people who are very, very, very, very clever!

© *The Times*

STREET CRIES OF OLD LONDON

THE PEERAGE SELLER



Bring out yer dosh!
Bring out yer dosh!

AMERICANS READY TO HAND OVER POWER

by Our Middle East Staff **Al Jazeera**

THE Iraqi authorities have now demonstrated that they are "fit to run their own country", officials in Washington claimed last night.

"The fact that they have been found to be torturing prisoners", said a spokesman, "shows that the Americans are no longer required. The Iraqis can clearly do the job themselves."

WHAT YOU MISSED

The New Alternative Rocky Horror Remembrance Service

No. 94. To be read in all churches on Sad Face Day (formerly Remembrance Sunday)

Chair *(for it is she)*: Brethren and sistren. We are gathered here to remember that some things are better forgotten – i.e. war. So can we start with a short silence when we try to remember what it is we've forgotten.

(Here there shall be a two-minute silence. Or one-minute silence, if that is sufficient. Or no minutes, if it is so deemed)

The Solemn Pledges

Chair: Do you solemnly commit yourselves to work for a world in which unpleasant conflict of any kind has been totally eliminated in a real sense?

All: We so pledge.

Chair: Do you further commit yourselves to working for the integrated welfare of the wider community, whether by air, land or sea?

All: We so pledge.

Chair: Do you also commit yourselves to developing a drive towards a sustainable racial and equality agenda, with full access for the disabled?

All: Indeedy we do.

Chair: In the name of religious, social and ethnic inclusiveness, we shall now sing that wonderful chorus by Yusuf Islam, from *Hymns Ancient And Muslim*, 'Morning Has Broken'.

Chair: That was nice, wasn't it?

(There shall now follow a suitable reading from the new translation of the Desiderata, *as transcribed from The Holy Teacloth Of Bury St Edmunds)*

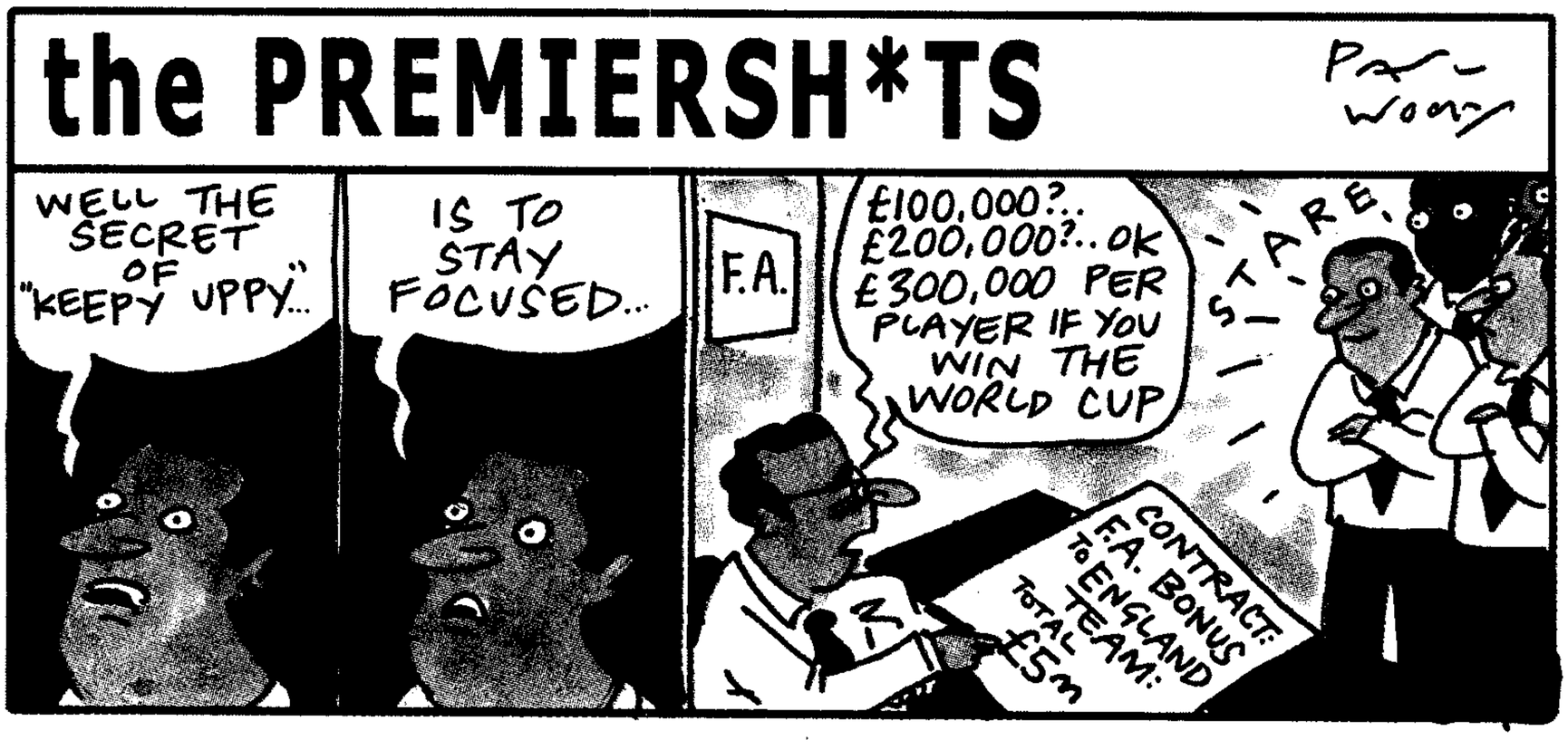
Reading

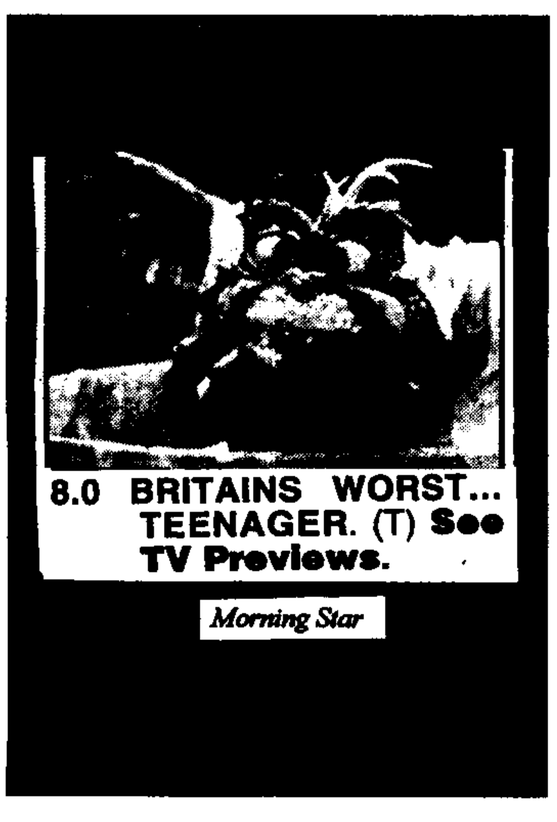
"Go peacefully through the streets and don't do anything I wouldn't do! Enjoy! Be lucky! Bless!"

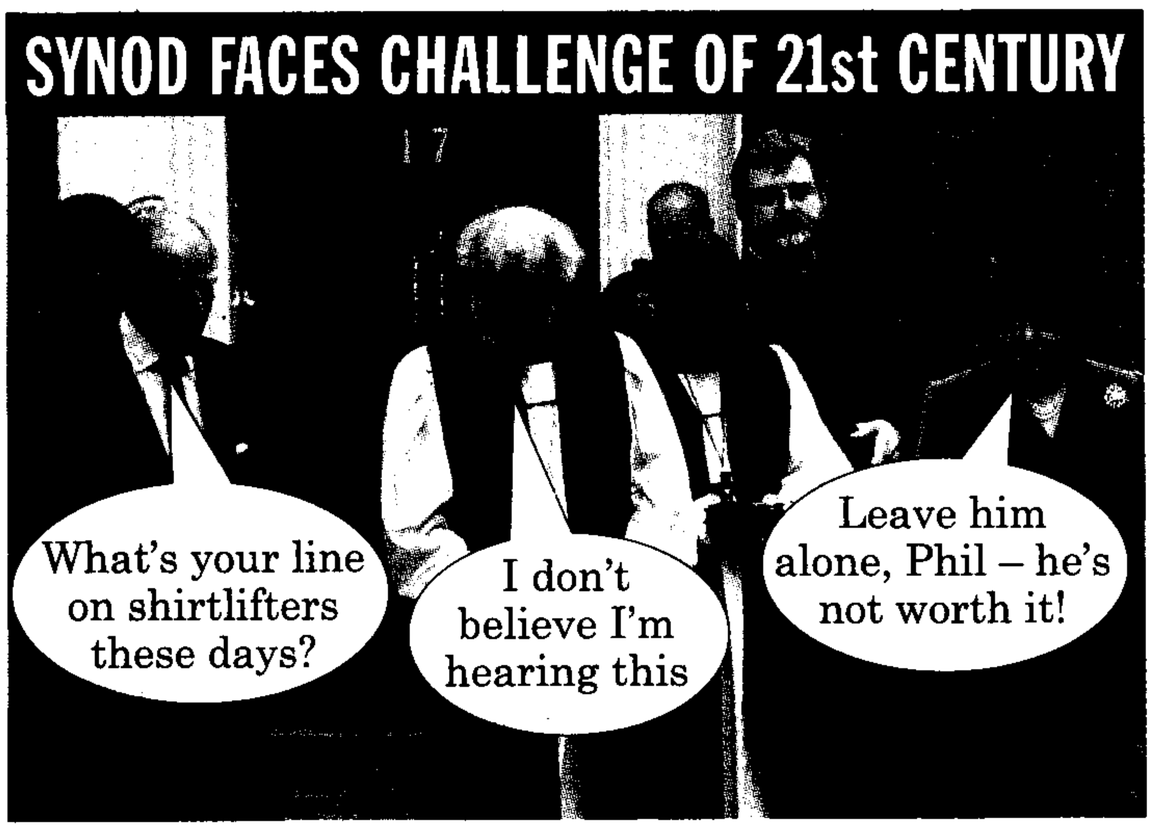
(At this point the service shall terminate with the playing on a trumpet [or it may be sampled from an electronic keyboard, should the Scouts and Brownies be unable to provide a trumpet or player] of Mr Louis Armstrong's much-loved hymn 'What A Wonderful World'. The congregation may join in with any bits they can remember)

All: ... trees of green ... skies of blue... dum-di-dum... la-la-la... think to myself, what a wonderful world...

(The congregation shall then proceed to the site of the old War Memorial, now the new Tesco extension, to carry out the traditional act of Sunday shopping)


the PREMIERSH*TS
Paul Woods
WELL THE SECRET OF "KEEPY UPPY"...
IS TO STAY FOCUSED...
F.A.
£100,000?.. £200,000?.. OK £300,000 PER PLAYER IF YOU WIN THE WORLD CUP
CONTRACT: F.A. BONUS TO ENGLAND TEAM: TOTAL £5m
STARE...




SYNOD FACES CHALLENGE OF 21st CENTURY
What's your line on shirtlifters these days?
I don't believe I'm hearing this
Leave him alone, Phil – he's not worth it!

New Betjeman Poem

The Eye today publishes for the first time the late Poet Laureate's most recent poem, dedicated from beyond the grave to his daughter Miss Candida Hunter-Green-Wellington.

Mrs Camilla Parker-Bowles,
Mrs Camilla Parker-Bowles,
Don't you look jolly lovely
In the back of the Royal Rolls?

(It's not very good, is it, but you can put it in if you like J.B.)

Hear the whole poem, read by Sir Ian McKellen, on www.eyepodcast.com

EXCLUSIVE

THOSE PRINCE CHARLES DIARIES

Sensational Extracts From The Secret Journals That Prince Charles Is Trying To Ban

Ying Tong Tiddle I Po, Tuesday

IT REALLY is appalling this handover thingie, pulling down the old flag – mater would be horrified, I mean we're not so bad really, particularly when you look at these ghastly Chinese Johnnies... Pater was right, you know, they do have slitty eyes and they all babble away in some language of their own. I said to friend Patten, "What a shower!" and he said, "Yes, that's because it's the monsoon season, sir!". Honestly, one does one's best, but does one ever get any gratitude? No, of course not. Perhaps they'll appreciate me when I'm deaded! Nicky nacky noo, Jim?!

© His Royal Highness The Prince of Goons, not to be circulated to anyone except people who will tell me how marvellous I am.

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

An Apology

IN THE past few months we may have given the impression that England's Ashes-winning cricket team are a credit to the nation, and that the national football team are nothing more than a bunch of overpaid no-hopers.

However in the light of the abject defeat in the First Test against Pakistan, it's become apparent that our cricket team is about as much use as a chocolate teapot, and that prima-donnas such as Freddie Flintoff and Kevin Pietersen are all washed up and ought to be dropped from the side immediately. In stark comparison to the over-hyped rabble in Multan, we should be proud of the spirit displayed by England's heroic footballers who gained magnificent victory over Argentina, a quite superb effort that will forever live in the memory of anyone privileged enough to have witnessed it – well, at least until they get knocked out of the World Cup by Costa Rica.

That American ending of the Pride and Prejudice film in full

Mr Darcy has carried Elizabeth Bennet out of the biscuit factory where she works, their ears ringing with the applause of her co-workers.

(The young lovers pause at the factory entrance, in front of a fluttering American flag)

Mr Darcy: Do you God-damn love me, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth Bennet: Almost as much as I love this God-damn country, Mr Darcy.

Mr Darcy: God-damn it!

(Mr Darcy and Elizabeth climb into a vintage '40s roadster and music swells as the car drives along a gorgeous coastal stretch of Highway 41 and disappears into a perfect sunset)

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the death of Lord Lichfield, photographer and cousin of the Queen

So. Farewell
Then Lord
Lichfield,

Photographer
Royal.

"Watch the
Birdie, Your
Royal Highness!"

That was
Your catchphrase.

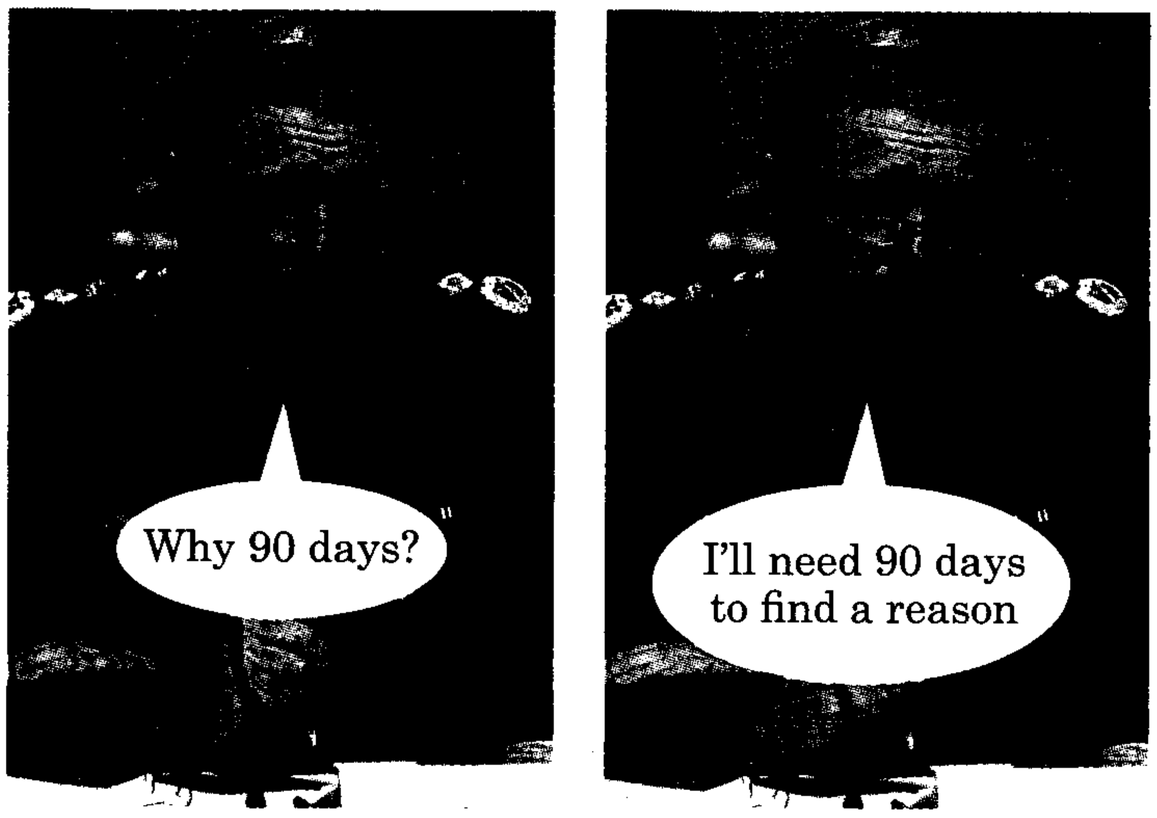
"Say cheese,
Ma'am."

That was another.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

"'Why straw?' you're thinking. Let me tell you... We at Wolf Construction are committed to building affordable homes for first-time buyers, using local materials wherever possible"

TERROR BILL



'MORE BOBBIES ON THE BEEB' demands Police Chief

by Our Broadcasting Staff **Yesminister Alibi-Barmy**

POLICE Chief Sir Ian 'Blair of the Yard' Knacker today appealed to the public to tell him what he should be doing, since he has no idea.

Delivering the BBC's annual Bumblebee Lecture, Sir Ian said: "It is up to the public to tell the police what sort of police service they want, in keeping with the needs of the 21st century."

Stop And Search Me

"The idea that you ring 999 and ask for a bobby to come round and help you because you are being robbed, raped and murdered is very last century.

"What we are looking for from the public is suggestions as to how the police can spend more time on the television.

"As our new slogan has it, 'We want more bobbies on the Beeb'. The message we are getting from the public is that they are reassured by the sight of a friendly policeman on their television, asking them what it is that the police are meant to do."

● ***Listen to Sir Ian's speech in full on our new Eye Podcasts!***

RADICAL PLAN FOR TODDLERS REVEALED

by Our Educational correspondent **Charles Moocow**

THE Government today announced a radical new plan for the education of nought to three year olds called 'childhood'.

"Apparently 'childhood' has been used around the world in a vast number of countries for many thousands of years as a means of educating very small children," said the education secretary Ruth Kelly. "Toddlers who've been allowed to enjoy a 'childhood', which consists of unstructured play and fun, are said to have enjoyed many benefits later in life."

However the Government's 'childhood' proposals were attacked by educationalists who said that they could leave some three year olds with a reading and writing age of three, *(cont. p. 94)*

"Yes, I do mind if we educate him while we conceive him"

WHAT YOU MISSED

That Paxman Cameron Interview in full

Paxman: Oh, come off it!

Cameron: I haven't said anything yet.

Paxman: OK, here's your starter for 10. What's a Pink Pussy?

Cameron: Er...

Paxman: No conferring... Come on! Come on!

Cameron: The new modern Tory Party must...

Paxman: Wrong! You lose five points. The correct answer is, "I'm pathetic, Jeremy, and I should resign at once."

Sound Effect: Bong!

Paxman: So the final score is Cameron (Oxford) 0; Paxman (Cambridge) 167. So congratulations to myself, and we say goodbye to Cameron.

Cameron: Goodbye!

(Ends. Silly music. Credits)

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Harry 'Toppo' Thompson, TV Producer, Biographer and Novelist

So. Farewell
Then Harry
'Toppo' Thompson.

Yes you were
The producer
Of many famous
Comedy shows.

Have I Got
News For
You. Harry Enfield
And Chums.
Ali G.

And of
Course *They*
Think It's
All Over.

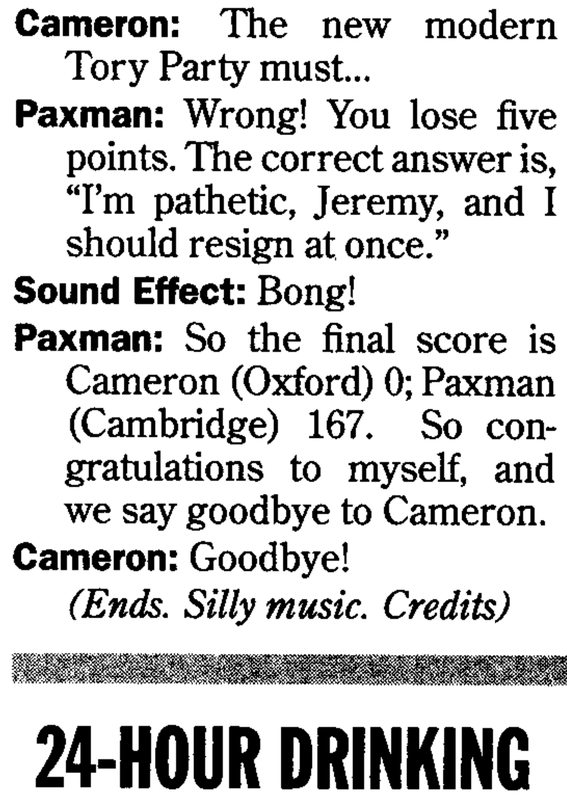
Sadly, it is
Now.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

"I think this Powerpoint presentation is a bit much"

TERROR

24-HOUR DRINKING



"Mum, what's a father?"

DIARY

SHARON OSBOURNE

I got Kelly a puppy the other day. Kelly loves, loves, loves puppies, she really really does. Don't ask me what fucking sort it was, but I tell you that puppy was fucking expensive, bless it, what with the diamonds we got put into its collar and tongue, the liposuction, the tummy-tuck, the arse-lift and the tail-job.

So Kelly's all over her beautiful new puppy, patting it and that, and she says she's going to call it Cuddles. "So why you wanna fuckin' call it Cuddaws?" I say.

"'Cos it looks like it wants a great big fuckin' cuddaw. So what you gonna fuckin' do 'bout it?" says Kelly. Bless!

So Cuddles it fucking was. At least for an hour, but then it only goes and fucking shits and pisses all over the new settee.

"What the fuckin' fuck's that?" says Kelly, pointing at the poo.

"That's fuckin' poo, that's what that is," I tell her.

"Urgh! I don't want this fuckin' dog no more! Get me a new one!" she says.

"So what we gonna fucking do with the old one, after all what we spent on it?" I say.

But at that point the problem's solved because Ozzy comes in and sits on it.

"Look what you just fucking gone and done!" I say to Ozzy.

Ozzy stands up and looks back down at the dead puppy.

"Funny," he says. "I can't remember eatin' that."

We gave Cuddles a beautiful send-off, though. We spent a shitload of money hiring Jose Carreras and that fat one, Jessye Norman, that's it, and the orchestra and chorus from the Royal Opera House for the afternoon and flying them over for Cuddles's funeral, mind you we got most of it back from MTV, who was filming it live.

As that little gold coffin was put into the ground I don't mind telling you I was in a terrible state, sobbing, sobbing, sobbing. I was in my funeral dress which the lovely Vivienne Westwood, a personal friend, had designed specially for the occasion.

I wrote a poem, "For Cuddles", which I read out at the graveside, choking through the fucking tears:

"I loved you little Cuddles
Your lovely fur and tail and head
Til Ozzy came along
And squashed you fucking dead."

It choked us all up, I read it so beautiful. But that's the kind of person I am, I wear my heart on my sleeve, and that's why the public warm to me, because they know I'm the kind of person who'll give a little puppy a good send-off, even if it's taken me to hell and back by shitting over my new settee.

"Fuck you!"

"No, fuck you!"

"No, fuck you!"

If there's one thing I've learnt, it's you can't win an argument with Camilla Parker-Bowles.

We're pees in a pod, her and me. We've both got a shitload of money, an adoring public and a hubby who wants his fucking brain examining.

And we're both royalty, if you know what I mean.

But that's no reason for her to get fucking above herself. She may be the duchess of fucking manure, for all I care, but that doesn't give her the fucking right to wear a tiara like mine. So last time I saw her, I got her in a corner and gave her what for. I was like, who the fuck do you think you are, madam? You're fucking B-list, you are, for all your fancy airs and crap hair-do. And you know what? People appreciate my honesty. We've been best mates ever since.

The X Factor. Don't get me started! When those lovely young men come on stage in their tight little trousers and sing their hearts out for Sharon, my heart melts. I truly care about every single one of them, I really do, and the public senses that, and that's why they love me.

Just yesterday, I was being driven along by my chauffeur in our $463,000 limousine. I was in the back with my plastic surgeon Roger, who was was just putting the finishing touches to my new toes (sorry, but you've got to have six on each foot these days if you want to be noticed). Suddenly, we hear this fucking yell from the river. A boat had capsized, and there's five people in the water struggling for their fucking lives, bless 'em!

Call me a great big softy, but I couldn't just leave them to drown, I'm sorry, that's not the kind of person I am! So I get the chauffeur to park near the river, and I get out the old mirror and make sure I'm looking fan-tastic – I'd never let the fans down, they want to see me at my best – then I squeeze into my $3000 stilettoes and walk ever so sexily down to the riverside, where there's just the one lifebelt to throw them.

The five of them are still thrashing about in the river, all fucking soggy and that, hair all over the place, only now there's only four, bless, because one's gone under! "Sorry guys, I can only rescue the one of you!" I announce, as sweetly as possible, because I truly care about them all, and I'd dearly love to be able to save each and everyone of them from drowning.

"So which of you lovely young people is it going to be?" I ask them. They look so adorable, all shivery and panicky and cuddly, thrashing about in the river and that. By now, they're all so desperate, they're screaming for help at the very tops of their super voices, they really are! Yes, they love me!

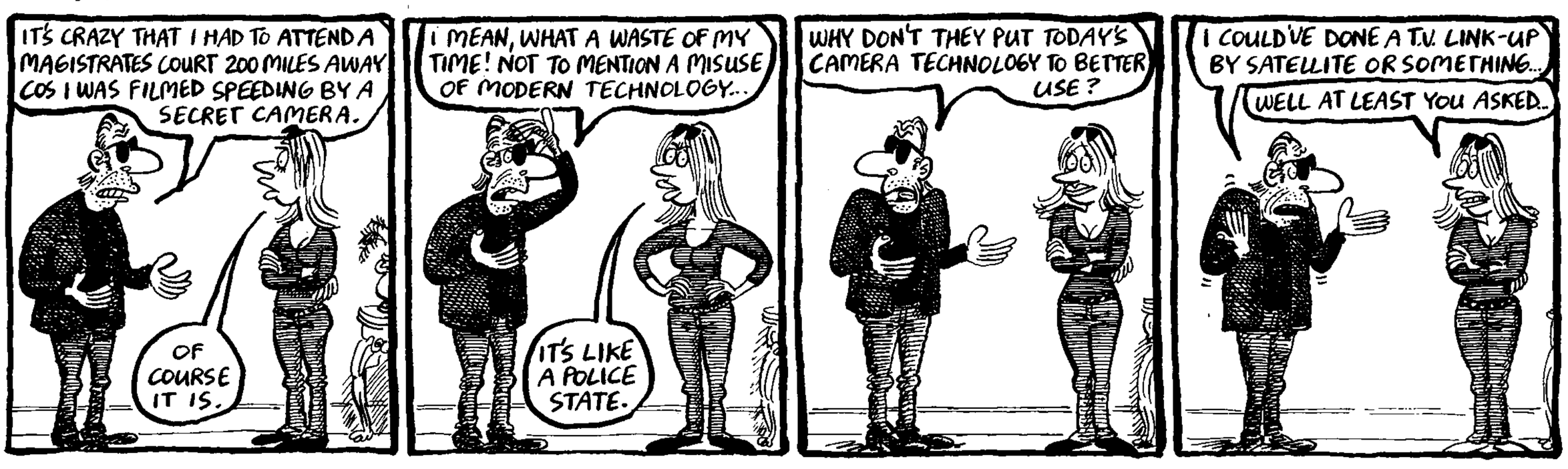
"Decisions, decisions!" I say, flashing my trademark smile. "I only wish I could save you all, you're all so truly fabulous!"

By now another one's gone under, and there's just the three left – but it doesn't make my choice any easier! "Ho-hum!" I say, "This is one of the toughest decisions of my life. It's truly momentous! You know what, guys? Sharon's going to have to have herself a little sit-me-down before deciding."

You could almost feel the tension in that river! So I have's myself my little sit-me-down, and check on my make-up – but when I get up again, the last three have disappeared below the water!

Yes – I'd left it too late! Story of my life! I'll never forget those young people's faces. I'd made their day! They looked so thrilled to have met Sharon Osbourne before they drowned. I walked back to the limousine with a lovely warm feeling in my heart. See, when you're in my position, you've got to put something back, you really have.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN


IT'S CRAZY THAT I HAD TO ATTEND A MAGISTRATES COURT 200 MILES AWAY COS I WAS FILMED SPEEDING BY A SECRET CAMERA.
OF COURSE IT IS.
I MEAN, WHAT A WASTE OF MY TIME! NOT TO MENTION A MISUSE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY...
IT'S LIKE A POLICE STATE.
WHY DON'T THEY PUT TODAY'S CAMERA TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER USE?
I COULD'VE DONE A T.V. LINK-UP BY SATELLITE OR SOMETHING...
WELL AT LEAST YOU ASKED...

Literary Review

Out now

Ashes books

(all publishers)

ALL WRITERS marvel at the slowness of publishers. Your book may not be out for two years, but we'd like the manuscript by next week at the latest, if you please, and Thursday morning rather than Thursday afternoon because we're all heading off for a long weekend. But when they have to move fast, and maybe even only have sandwiches for lunch, publishers can surprise us all. Such has been the case this summer and autumn as every imprint in London has grabbed its own Cash In On The Ashes book.

How fast fashions change. Until recently the general consensus was that cricket publishing was dead, much as cricket was. Football publishing was where it was at, and still is if the judges of the William Hill Sports Book of the Year Award have anything to do with it. (This year they have shortlisted three very moderate football titles and no cricket books at all.) But England's astounding success in the Ashes, combined with a growing public disenchantment with what now only Ben Elton calls "the beautiful game", changed many important publishing minds, and the result has been an unstoppable flow of Ashes books, one or two of which someone might even read.

Top seller of the moment, not surprisingly, is Andrew Flintoff's *Being Freddie: My Story So Far* (Hodder & Stoughton), an entirely predictable, down-the-line sports autobiog from our new national hero. With numerous photos of him as a child (looking exactly as he does now, only smaller and less hairy) it catalogues his successes, failures and, most gruelingly, injuries (he tells us that one injection "in the pubic area" during the 2002-3 Ashes tour was the fiercest pain he has ever experienced). It's a perfectly professional piece of ghostwriting, but appreciably less fun than watching him bowl, bat, field or stand on an open-top bus trying to manage a monumental hangover. It's efficient, no more.

As, more surprisingly, is Richie Benaud's *My Spin On Cricket* (Hodder & Stoughton). Instant nostalgia for cricket's most beloved commentator and Yoda lookalike has generated considerable sales for the latest of his hard-backed pronouncements on the state of the game, but there is a price for being as wise and judicious as Benaud: slightly boring books. Regular Benaud readers will soon spot the reappearance of favourite themes, such as the tied Test of 1960-1, which crops up every 20 pages or so, like a tickly cough. The whole is as soothing as a Radox bath. Just be careful you don't drop off while reading it.

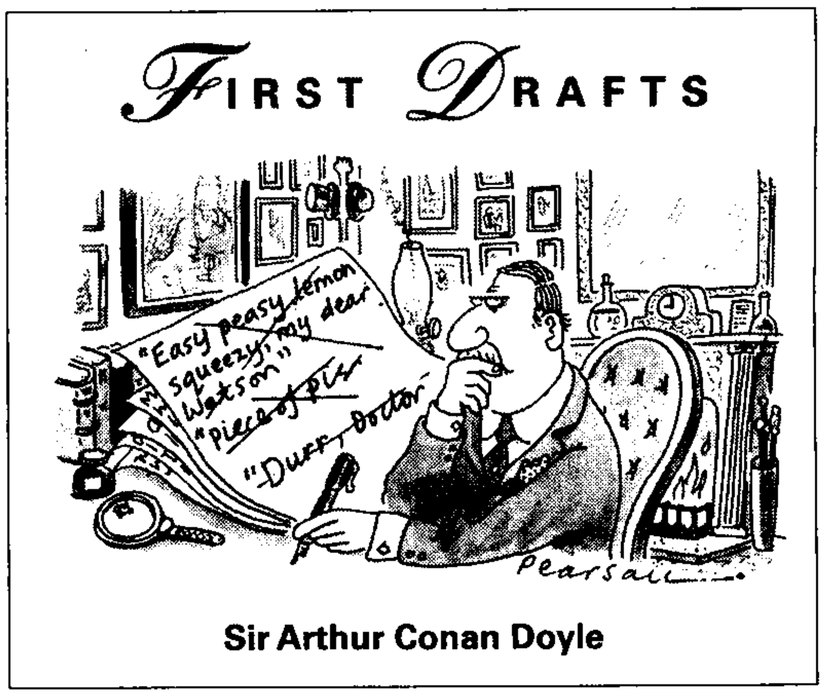
Michael Vaughan's *Calling The Shots* (Hodder & Stoughton) is subtitled "My Story As England Captain" and is the second in what promises to be a long line of autobiography-cum-diaries. (In this he will be hoping to emulate the former Australian captain Steve Waugh, who ended up publishing one a year for a decade.) Like the man himself, Vaughan's books are a tiny bit bland with an undercurrent of steel. You wade through pages of guff for the interesting or pointed comment, and it eventually does come, but in between he tends to say the same things over and over again. He invented the huddle. He likes 11 captains on the field. Tries not to take it too seriously. The key is enjoyment. Still has the same friends he grew up with in Sheffield. There used to be cliques in the England team but not any more. He invented the huddle...

Graham Thorpe's *Rising From The Ashes* (HarperCollins) has already been overtaken by circumstances, but it's hard work anyway, concentrating on domestic horrors rather than the gritty centuries people actually want to read about. Chapter titles include "Fathers 4 Justice" and "I Don't Like Cricket, I Hate It". By far the best of these autobiographies is the England coach Duncan Fletcher's. *Ashes Regained: The Coach's Story* (Simon & Schuster) is full of stuff we didn't know and would like to know, a rare combination. Needless to say it is selling a fraction of the copies of the other books.

All these books are ghostwritten but hacks have also been busy under their own names. David Frith's *Battle For The Ashes* (Ebury Press) arrives from a Grand Old Man of cricket reporting, now more of a grumpy old man, unfortunately. It's rather a tired, one-more-paragraph-to-go piece of work, with more historical background than any other book but less obvious pleasure in the here and now. Much sharper and pithier is Gideon Haigh's *Ashes 2005: the Greatest Test Series*. Haigh is Australian (with English parents, so supports England on the cricket field) and writes as originally as anyone on the game, although he is growing unnaturally fond of what one might call the Clive James construction. "Glenn McGrath, the key Australian presence at Lord's, was the key Australian absence at Edgbaston." Say that to yourself in the appropriate accent, and try not to scream.

The cheapest book here, and one of the best, *Is It Cowardly To Pray For Rain?* (Abacus) is the collected over-by-over commentaries from Guardian Online. Think of it as a younger and funnier version of *Test Match Special*, full of irrelevance, irreverence, blind prejudice and a deep love of cricket. The four online commentators don't even pretend to be at the game: we know all along that they are sitting in an office in Farringdon watching the telly.

But who really needs eight books about the Ashes, or even one, now that England are losing again in Pakistan? Even publishers can't move that quickly. Keep an eye on the remainder shops come January. You'll see more photos there of England players celebrating victory than just about anywhere else.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ "LEADING bookseller" appears to have created a PR crisis through its attempts to advertise for a temporary head of PR to cover maternity leave.

The original version of the advertisement referred to "a particular focus on issues and crisis management [...] and the development and implementation of a post merger PR template." This was soon amended to remove all references to mergers, while downplaying the crisis side of the job. Unfortunately, when the amended version appeared on the Bookseller's jobs website, the old, potentially incendiary version wasn't removed.

If the identity of the bookseller were known, such careless talk could well have a grave effect on the share price. As it happens, there aren't too many west London-based booksellers capable of paying executives £50-55,000, who are currently going through a merger and acquisition process. Faces at Waterstone's high command in Brentford must be very red indeed.

■ *EVERY Monday the* Evening Standard*'s books pages run a list of "London's best sellers", the most popular titles at 10 bookshops across the capital.*

For two weeks running in November, one of the top five non-fiction titles was Round About Chatsworth by Deborah Devonshire (aka the dowager Duchess of Devonshire), a title so obscure it has not received a single review in the UK press, let along featured in anyone else's bestseller lists.

Could its presence be in any way related to the fact that one of the shops which provides data for the survey is Heywood Hill, the Bloomsbury emporium whose majority shareholder is... the dowager Duchess of Devonshire?

'Bookworm'

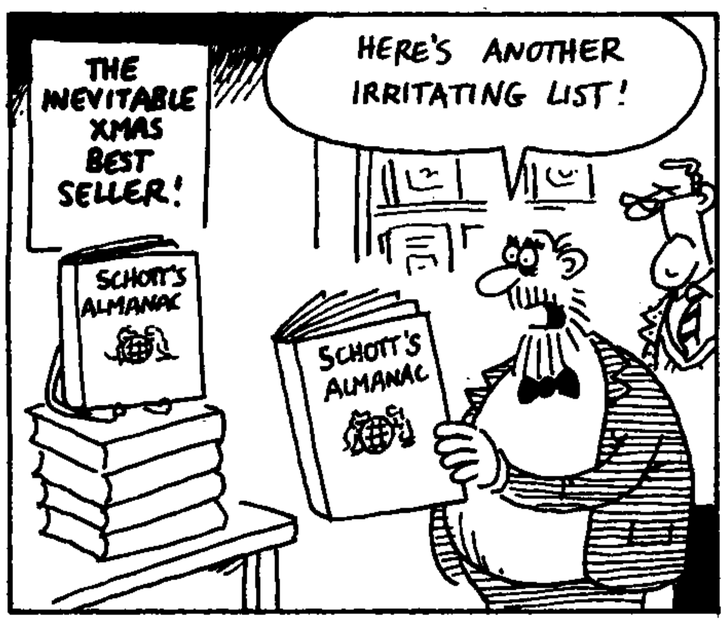
LIBRARY NEWS

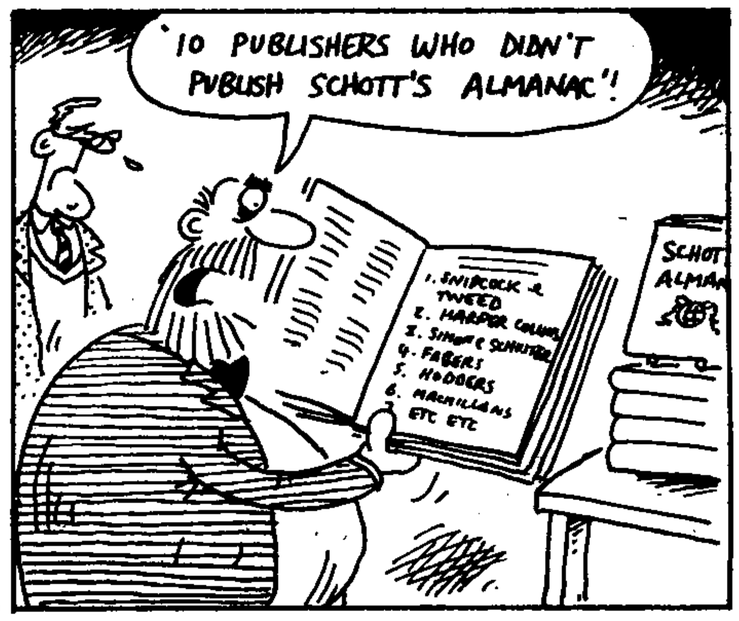
■ THE future of Newcastle-upon-Tyne's city library remains uncertain as the firms bidding for a multi-million pound PFI project have been asked to try again.

Earlier bids from several of the usual suspects (Kajima, Kier and Laing) all came in way over budget for the £21m of PFI credits the city council was originally given to replace the central library and three branch libraries back in 2003.

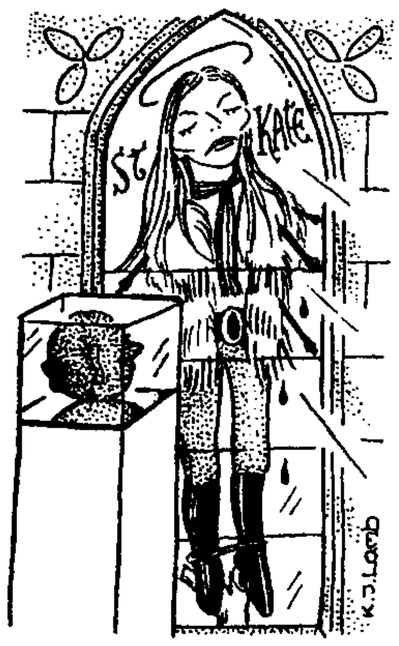
The council went back to the government, cap in hand, and now has just over £40m to offer the private firms – but it has also had to cut back its plans to just the central library and one branch library. Meanwhile, last month the council had to approve an extra £1.1m of its own spending to cover the spiralling cost of working on developing the project, because it's taken so long to negotiate.

One possible reason Newcastle is struggling to afford new libraries is that they can't just be plain, sensible buildings fit for the purpose of storing and lending books and providing comfortable chairs for readers. These days no self-respecting PFI contractor is going to offer anything less than expensive flights of architectural fancy that can be entered for the Stirling Prize – whether they're useful as a library space or not – eg Brighton's Jubilee Library (*Eyes passim*).





Pseuds Corner



She'll come out a more culturally complex figure.
MARC QUINN on his friend Kate Moss's recent misfortunes, ***Evening Standard***

Au Naturel (1994) consists of a mattress on which an empty bucket and a couple of melons represent female genitalia and breasts, while the male sexual apparatus is represented by a cucumber and a pair of oranges. "There is a whole vocabulary of materials that I use, but there is always a certain serendipity to the way I put it all together," she says.

Review of Sarah Lucas exhibition at the Tate, Liverpool, ***Independent***

This novel is so very special. If you reach the last page without having laughed out loud, felt tears well up or at least once sat back in wonder at the extraordinary descriptions of the sea and its creatures, then you may, quite simply, be inhuman.

TOM BONCZA-TOMASZEWSKI, reviewing The Highest Tide by Jim Lynch, ***Independent on Sunday***

Wim Delvoye spent ten years collecting the circular boxes of processed cheese La Vache qui rit (The Laughing Cow) to create his On the origin of the species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life, 2004. As the Darwinian title suggests, the work charts the evolutionary progress of the red cow depicted on the box lids over a number of decades, showing that capitalism, like any organism fighting for the survival of its kind, has a constantly developing genealogy all its own.

PYRLE BEHRMAN,
Art Monthly

I remember being reduced to a wreck by The Tigger Movie. It's certainly no masterpiece; more a cash-in on Winnie The Pooh. Yet it's utterly devastating when Tigger realises that there are no other tiggers in the Hundred Acre Wood, and that he is essentially alone in the world. Beneath the comic pathos, there's a recognition of primal human pain here that's as bleak as anything in Beckett.

S.F. SAID,
Daily Telegraph

Pseuds Corporate

'Writing on Water' is inspired by the same themes that characterise the life of Nelson and, indeed, the whole Lloyds culture. It is about intrepidness and the sea, in all its majesty, its allure and also its danger. Like Lloyds, Writing on Water is founded upon the constancy of the oceans and, like Lloyds, it is thoroughly original. A calculated risk, it fits into no category except its own.

An item in the London Sinfonietta's 2005/6 programme sponsored by Lloyds of London

CONTRIBUTORS: C.J. Apperley, Marie Noble, Tim Martin, John Halton, John Regan, Strobes.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

NIGER FORGERIES

Funky business

MORE is emerging on the lengths to which the US State Department went in trying to promote the myth that Saddam was building nuclear weapons.

When the department finally handed its "evidence" to international weapons inspectors in 2003 that the Iraqi dictator was trying to buy uranium from the African state of Niger, it held back the one document even its own analysts knew was "clearly a forgery" and "funky".

Experts at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) quickly twigged that all the papers were fake when they spotted errors that had slipped passed the State Department and CIA; and the clear suggestion is that because the US government handed over the whole bundle of what became known as the "Niger Forgeries" except the one paper it recognised as a hoax, it was hoping to pass off documents it knew or suspected were phoney as the real thing.

Italian journalist Elisabetta Burba (pictured right) originally took the "Niger Forgeries" to the US embassy in Rome in October 2002. At first the papers seemed to provide the "smoking gun" Washington needed to prove that Saddam was about to go nuclear. But when the papers were faxed to the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the INR, it realised the documents were dubious.

According to the US senate select committee on intelligence, one paper made an analyst so "suspicious of the validity of the documents" that he immediately emailed his colleagues: "You'll note that it bears a funky Emb[assy] of Niger stamp (to make it look official, I guess)."

Most of the papers purported to be telexes, letters and contracts between Iraq and Niger concerning the sale of "yellowcake" uranium ore; but the "funky" document had a different subject. According to the suspicious US analyst, it "mentioned some type of military campaign against major world powers. The members of the alleged military campaign included both Iraq and Iran, and was, according to the documents, being orchestrated through the Nigerien embassy in Rome". This was "completely implausible" and its existence destroyed the credibility of all the other documents "because the stamp on this document matched the stamp on the uranium document".

Private Eye has obtained a full set of the Niger forgeries, and it is easy to see why the US was wanted to hide the "funky" document from the UN inspectors. It describes a fantastic collaboration of "outlaw" nations that would be barely credible in an Austin Powers movie. Apparently the ambassadors of Libya, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and Niger all met at the Iraqi embassy in Rome and formed an international military group codenamed "global support". It would back "governments submitted to an embargo; governments continually suspected, and without just cause, of producing nuclear, bacteriological, chemical weapons; governments accused, without just cause, of international terrorism" and "Islamic patriots accused of belonging to criminal organizations, to cells having non-existent ramifications". The "Global Support" group "is active worldwide, in all areas and extreme climates". SPECTRE, eat your heart out.

By 13 January 2003 the INR nuclear analyst was also warning other intelligence staff that "the uranium purchase agreement probably is a hoax". His reasoning was based entirely on the non-uranium "funky" document which described the absurd Austin Powers fantasy. This document "was so ridiculous that it was clearly a forgery."

As this paper was so clearly fake, so too were all the other Niger documents. Despite this the US government referred to an Iraq-Niger connection in its efforts to build support for war. Not only that, but IAEA inspectors did not receive the "hoax" paper with its "funky" stamp before the Iraq war and were unaware of its existence until now.

Private Eye repeatedly asked the State Department to explain why it had not passed the crucial document on to the IAEA, but received no reply.

Though the CIA has now withdrawn all its claims about Saddam's "Niger connection", the British government persists in its claim that it had separate "intelligence" justifying the Niger-Iraq assertions in Tony Blair's Iraq dossier. The US also had "separate" intelligence but, on examination, this turned out to be inspired by the same poisoned source emanating from Rome. Imagine how embarrassing it would be if the British government comes clean (which it won't) and it emerges that Britain's second "source" was also rested on the "funky" and "ridiculous" Niger forgeries.

COUNTRYSIDE PROPERTIES

Expanding waste line

AT prime minister's questions last week Jim Dobbin, Labour MP for Heywood and Middleton, told Tony Blair he was concerned about the proposed movement by road of 3,500 tonnes of asbestos-contaminated rubble through his and neighbouring constituencies.

The waste, from Turner & Newall's former site in Rochdale, must be moved if a controversial development of 650 homes by the government's favourite developer, Countryside Properties, is to go ahead (*Eyes passim*).

"Can my Right Hon friend confirm," asked Dobbin, "that the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive must at all costs protect the people of those three communities?"

Not the toughest question of the day, but Blair seemed stumped. Hansard records:

"I am looking around the Chamber, but I am afraid I am not getting a great deal of help. *[Laughter.]* Thank you very much. I am not getting a great deal of help from the Opposition either."

Mr Dobbin's constituents are unlikely to find the subject so amusing. Many have received one of 50,000 printed glossy "newsletters" distributed by Countryside Properties (CP), in the Rochdale area. CP, whose reputation for accuracy in the field of contaminated land has been well documented in the *Eye*, has once again dramatically misrepresented what the government considers "safe" levels of asbestos contamination.

The newsletter states: "The HSE have regarded concentrations of less than 0.01 per cent as 'safe'." Not true – the Health and Safety Executive has *never* issued any guideline figures on "safe" levels of asbestos in soil. As the developers do not seem to know what constitutes "safe", Mr Dobbin is perhaps right to ask for assurances.

Countryside Properties

DEPORTATION

Dawn raiders

WELFARE and immigration groups have launched an appeal for help in tracing a vulnerable teenager, missing since his family were taken from their Glasgow flat in a dawn raid by immigration officials 12 days ago and deported back to Pakistan.

Angry Scottish parliamentarians have demanded an inquiry into the "inhumane" raid, which saw the family split up and has led to fears for the safety of 16-year-old Fahad Ahmed, who was staying with friends in London when his mother, Farhat, older brother Faheem and 13-year-old sister Zoha, were taken from their home on the Royston estate on 11 November.

Despite his mother's pleas about her missing son, immigration officials confiscated their mobile phone, their only means of contact with him. Nor were they allowed to contact a lawyer, nor wait for the boy's return on the Monday morning. It was only when the family were on board the flight awaiting take off to Pakistan that Farhat was able to ring a neighbour and ask her to look out for her son. A note was posted on the empty flat's door, but no one has seen Fahad.

Robina Qureshi (pictured left), director of Positive Action in Housing, said: "We are very worried about his welfare. He has no keys or mobile phone. His friends and neighbours are desperate to trace him and provide support. We don't know if he has disappeared, if he is scared or even if he is alive."

The Home Office said it could not discuss "individual cases", so it isn't known if it has taken any steps to find out whether or not Fahad is safe. A spokesman would only say: "We always try to keep families together, but there are sometimes occasions when this is not possible."

Scottish politicians are increasingly alarmed at the effects on young children of the heavy-handed dawn raids of immigration officials. Only weeks before the swoop on the Ahmeds, Jack McConnell, Scotland's first minister, promised to try to end such aggressive detentions. His promise followed the case of a family of five, who had lived in Glasgow for five years, who were dragged from their beds by 16 immigration officers in body armour and riot gear and deported to Kosovo. In another case, two Turkish primary school children, aged nine and six, saw their parents handcuffed and taken in caged vans to a detention centre prior to removal.

Sandra White, the SNP's equal opportunities spokeswoman, has called for a halt to such raids until there has been a full review.

Plane nonsense

MEANWHILE, as the *Eye* was going to press lawyers, politicians and campaigners were attempting an 11th hour bid to halt the deportation of Iranian journalist Amir Hassan (pictured right), who ran the first private internet company and web service in Iran.

When the Iranian state clamped down on internet use and sought to confiscate his company, Amir launched a public protest which led in 2003 to the downfall and impeachment of the Minister of Posts and Telecommunication, Ahmad Motamedi. As a result Amir was twice arrested, assaulted and had threats made on his life. He fled to the UK in 2004 and claimed asylum.

At his appeal last April, the adjudicator said he had "no hesitation" in accepting the core of Amir's evidence, but he dismissed the threats to his life. He also rejected the claim that the friend who had helped Amir flee Iran had himself been arrested and imprisoned. Amir's representatives say they now have a transcript of the friend's trial in Tehran and want a fresh appeal, but claim the Home Office is trying to thwart that by speedily deporting him. He was detained last week and it was only thanks to the intervention of his MP, Celia Barlow, that he won a three-day stay.

Despite a promise to the MP that Amir would not be deported, he was removed from his cell at Harmondsworth detention centre at 4am on Friday and taken to Heathrow for deportation. It was only because a member of his campaign group went to Heathrow and the Queens Building Detention Centre there, that the removal was prevented. For how long, no one knows.

BCCI

Delost Cause

AS recriminations begin over the collapse of the legal action brought by BCCI's liquidator Deloitte against the Bank of England, many former employees and depositors want to know why a lost cause was pursued for so long at a cost of anything up to £200m? And why didn't Deloitte's top brass twig ages ago, as everyone else seems to have done, that the case was doomed?

Unfortunately for the creditors, the Deloitte boss who should have been taking a critical view of the case wasn't entirely detached from the wrangling. The firm's £3.6m-a-year senior partner John Connolly was also the man in charge of the liquidation in the early 1990s when the ill-fated decision to sue the Bank for "misfeasance" was taken.

Deloitte may soon be made to pay for holding out for so long. If the judge decides that the liquidator should have known its case was hopeless some time ago, it could be that Mr Connolly and partners have to chip in for some of the Bank's estimated £100m-plus legal bill, along with the long-suffering creditors.

CONDITIONAL FEE AGREEMENTS

Greed is good

SIX years ago the Government legislated to adopt the Woolf reforms (named after the recently retired Lord Chief Justice), which aimed in part to control the ever-rising cost of litigation. What went wrong?

One way greedy lawyers have tried to limit the effect Woolf has on their wallets has been to use the newfangled Conditional Fee Agreement (CFA), introduced with the commendable aim of allowing anyone with a decent claim to hire a lawyer on a no-win no-fee basis. (The other aim was to cut the Government's legal aid bill.)

To encourage lawyers to take on the risk of losing and not being paid, they are allowed to charge up to double their normal fees if they do win, all of which has to be paid by the losing defendant. This so-called "uplift" is supposed to reflect the risk: the stronger the case, the lower the uplift and vice versa.

Many lawyers were quick to jump on the CFA bandwagon in making claims against newspapers and other publishers for libel and breaches of privacy. And one of the first to seek to double its money in this way has been the *Eye*'s old adversary Carter-Fuck, keen to perpetuate the memory of legendary greed of its eponymous, alas now deceased, founder.

The *Eye* was also one of the first intended victims of Carter-Ruck's avarice when the *Eye* was sued for libel by bent accountant John Condliffe. Before the trial Carter-Ruck went on a CFA and told the *Eye* that if the magazine fought and lost, the *Eye* would have to pay double the normal (already huge) costs – probably be more than £1m. The implication was clear: the *Eye* would be much better off settling before trial (still having to pay C-R costs up to that point) as even if it eventually won, Condliffe would have no money to pay the *Eye*'s costs. In other words, whatever the *Eye* did it would end up spending a fortune. Happily the *Eye* resisted these blandishments and Carter-Fuck ended up with nothing when the case collapsed (see *Eye* 1041).

This blackmailing or ransom factor has caused even the richest media organizations to think twice before defending a case, and so the decision is often taken to settle even a weak CFA claim before the claimant's costs get out of control. But with such rich pickings on offer, Carter-Fuck and others have ignored the Condliffe setback and kept trying to milk the system. Carter-Ruck & Partners and other London firms now charge anything up to £500 per hour – or £1,000 (plus VAT) on double-your-money CFA rates.

The Government of course disclaims any responsibility for the situation it has created – despite a spate of crazy cases brought on CFAs.

In 2003, for example, the *Sun* mistakenly published a photograph of an innocent Norfolk man and labelled him a paedophile. His local solicitor complained and the *Sun* immediately accepted its mistake and negotiations about redress began. Suddenly Carter-Ruck muscled in and entered into a CFA with the man at a 100 percent mark-up – the highest possible, supposed to reflect the risk of losing (which of course was non-existent as the *Sun* had admitted liability!)

In due course C-R presented the *Sun* with a bill for more than £91,000, which the *Sun* had to spend more money challenging in court, when it was reduced to £32,000.

Carter-Ruck's dismal record of conducting CFA litigation was criticized only two weeks ago when Mr Justice Gray (the all-wise judge at the Condliffe trial) berated the Carter-Fuckers for trying to withhold crucial information from the other side – on "utterly misconceived grounds" – in a case it was bringing for a former health service worker against the BBC. Not only that but C-R had just revised its costs estimate for the case from £360,000 to just under £700,000 – a mere 100 percent, on top of which it would still add its mark-up of another 100 percent!

The power of the court to control costs is cited by Carter-Ruck and others as a way in which newspapers are protected; but the reality is that it involves going to the Court Costs Department at yet more expense and gambling that the court will make enough of a reduction to make the exercise worth it, all the time facing the risk of getting lumbered with yet more of the claimant's costs at double the rate.

Even though CFAs are clearly used to bully defendants into settlement, the Government seems unconcerned – despite mounting criticism from judges on the stifling effect CFAs are having on the press and freedom of speech. It even decided to devolve supervision of CFAs to the Law Society, the solicitors' trade union, which can be relied on to defend the interests of Carter-Ruck and the like. The Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer and his cronies seem to think all these problems can be resolved by friendly chats between lawyers and media firms. Given the rapacious behaviour of the lawyers to date, this seems unlikely. Old Peter Carter-Ruck must be chuckling in his grave.

BABAR AHMAD

Clarke to the court

BY AGREEING to extradite Babar Ahmad (pictured right) to the United States, Home Secretary Charles Clarke is effectively giving his "glorifying terrorism" law an early outing.

Ahmad, a computer officer from Tooting, south London, is accused of supporting terrorism by running various websites. The US indictment on which Ahmad will be extradited says that "all times material to the indictment, defendant Babar Ahmad... was a resident of the United Kingdom living in London". The Connecticut district attorney seeks extradition on the slim grounds that one of the websites in question had an internet service provider in his state.

When British judge Timothy Workman allowed the extradition pending Clarke's ruling, he said: "This is a difficult and troubling case. The defendant is a British subject who is alleged to have committed offences which, if the evidence were available, could have been prosecuted in this country." However, under Labour's new extradition law (which is not reciprocal), US authorities do not have to show a "prima facie" case for extradition: they merely have to show that they have brought charges.

Ahmad was arrested by British police, but he was subsequently released without charge. His re-arrest on the American charges stems from their much looser anti-terrorism laws. British authorities apparently lacked evidence to show that Ahmad was linked to terrorism in the sense of conspiring to plant bombs or similar acts. (Ahmad's supporters say he should be prosecuted in the UK or released.) However, most of the American case relates simply to charges that Ahmad ran a website before 11 September 2001 that expressed support for Islamic fighters in Chechnya and Bosnia and for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

While the UK does not (yet) have laws about "glorifying terrorism", in America prosecutions can be launched under the "Patriot Act" on grounds of "material support" for terrorism. US prosecutors have widened the interpretation of "material support" to include statements considered to be supporting terrorism. However, while this kind of "material support" has launched prosecutions, it does not easily lead to convictions: Last year a jury in Idaho acquitted Sami Omar Al Hussayen of just such charges. Al Hussayen, a postgraduate computer student at the University of Idaho, was accused of "material support" for terrorism because he ran websites that prosecutors said supported fighters in Chechnya and Hamas in Israel – a case very similar to the charges against Babar Ahmad. Al Hussayen was held in solitary confinement for 511 days, but freed when the jury accepted his "freedom of speech" defence.

FINANCIAL REGULATION

Back from the red

ABERDEEN Asset Management, chief culprit in the split capital trust scandal that is estimated to have cost savers around £600m, is recovering well from its mauling at the end of last year by the dead sheep at the Financial Services Authority (see *Eye* 1123).

Things have turned out so well for the company that it can again afford to lavish hospitality on those who might help it sell more of its dodgy investments. Last month executives took 11 of Britain's finest freeloaders (*"respected financial journalists", surely?*), many from the national press, on a freebie weekend to Malta, where the firm has an agreement with a local company to flog Aberdeen products to the island's 400,000 population.

A company spokesman assured the *Eye* that, far from being a junket, the aim of the visit was to examine pensions reforms currently being enacted by the Valletta government, which might have important lessons for changes over here.

Really? The topic was of such immense interest to the press pack that since returning from their agreeable jaunt not a single word has appeared in the British papers about those fascinating developments in Maltese pensions.

However, Aberdeen's new bond fund (with no Malta connection but on which the hacks had to sit through a presentation), has been plugged by a couple of tanned and appreciative personal finance scribes.

Meanwhile, it has emerged from the accounts of the firms involved in the splits scandal that the compensation they agreed to pay – estimated to total £196m, including Aberdeen's £43m – is tax-deductible. So what little they do cough up will receive a taxpayer subsidy of around £50m (the cost of a small hospital), a matter conveniently omitted from the FSA's announcement of a deal that it knew would be criticised as too soft even without the tax break.

In May last year the FSA indicated that £350m would be acceptable, whereas it now looks like the firms will just be stung for around £135m between them for what FSA chairman Callum McCarthy once called "collusion on a very substantial scale".

Protection racket

NOT many crooks, caught red-handed, expect to keep the swag and be given a few months to mend their ways before having their collar felt. But that's how Britain's financial policeman, the Financial Services Authority (FSA), has announced that it will treat some of the country's richest and most adept swindlers.

The FSA has uncovered widespread evidence of mis-selling of the payment protection insurance (PPI) policies that vastly increases the costs of personal loans. Around half the 30 firms the regulator looked at "failed to take reasonable steps to ensure that customers did not buy policies on which they could not claim", while "most firms did not have systems in place to assess suitability adequately" and "the level and structure of inducements and targets for sales staff could encourage mis-selling".

Sound familiar? These are exactly the problems that caused the pensions, endowments, splits etc ad nauseum mis-selling scandals from which the financial industry has had plenty of chance to learn. But, pressed by parliament's treasury select committee a fortnight ago to get tough, FSA chairman Callum McCarthy (once a banker himself – pictured left) insisted: "Given that we have been responsible for this for less than a year I think that we have tackled it firmly and been determined to get the evidence to make sure that we understood it, and as soon as we had that evidence have taken action."

The "action" announced by the FSA amounts to having "put the industry on notice to improve its sales practices", with a promise to check up on it again next year while pursuing only the "most serious" cases already found.

The message to mis-sellers is clear: don't fret about ripping off punters until we eventually get round to regulating your latest scam – and then kindly be good enough to stop doing it.

Oil over now

THE announcement from the Financial Services Authority (FSA) that it won't be taking action against any individual over Shell's multi-billion pound reserves fiddle leaves both former chairman Sir Philip Watts and ex-head of exploration Walter van de Vijver in the clear.

While the FSA won't give reasons, the two men evidently aren't held to blame for the fiddle despite evidence that they knew the reserves shown in the accounts were misleading. Most damning was an email from Van de Vijver to Watts saying: "I am becoming sick and tired about lying about the extent of our reserves issues and the downward revisions that need to be done because of far too aggressive/optimistic bookings."

Watts sought to exonerate himself in a submission to the regulator by saying "the FSA... has failed to take account of the reasonableness of Shell's reliance on the review of reserves information performed by the external auditors". The auditors, who compromised themselves by earning more than their audit fees from consultancy work for the company, were KPMG and PwC.

So are these firms at fault for signing off on dodgy reserves? The body responsible for their conduct, the Financial Reporting Council (whose governing council includes a senior PwC partner), conducts its business in secret and won't say whether the work of the auditors is being looked at.

Expect another major British corporate scandal to recede quietly into history with nobody held to account.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **TELSCOMBE TYE:** The ugly wall of chalk, rubble and metal pipes put up – in the name of conservation – across a crest of Sussex downland in an area of outstanding natural beauty has now been found to contain... asbestos.

Residents of Telscombe Tye were delighted when East Sussex County Council demanded that the wall, or "bunds", be removed because it was erected without planning permission. Built to deter travellers, joy riders and fly-tippers, it was supposed to be a small chalk-built ride but at its highest it reached 5ft and contained masses of fly-tipped builders rubble.

But the South Downs Conservation Board, which manages the Tye, was hoping to remove the rubble and reduce the size and re-apply for planning permission. That was until the asbestos was found. Now the dispute with residents is raging again.

Residents want the entire bunds and all asbestos removed and the area made safe. They have collected pieces of asbestos, had them tested and alerted the Environment Agency. But the conservation body, no doubt hoping to save on the huge costs of such an operation, are still hoping they can get away with cleaning off the surface and grassing over the bunds. And, because they are conservationists, they might just get away with one of the largest cases of illicit dumping in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

IF GREED was not all that mattered in the City, the apparent murder earlier this month of one of Kazakhstan president Nursultan Nazarbayev's more vocal critics weeks ahead of next month's elections might cause those bankers and investors rushing to do business in the oil- and mineral-rich Central Asian state to pause for thought. But there are tens of millions to be made from floating Kazakh companies.

In a style reminiscent of the old Soviet era from which Nazarbayev emerged, Zamanbek Nurkadilov was found at home shot twice in the chest and once in the head with his own gun. The police said there was no evidence of any intruders and were considering "different versions". Obviously suicide!

Nurkadilov broke from Nazarbayev last year, joined the opposition movement For a Just Kazakhstan and accused Nazarbayev, in power since 1989, of corruption. He is far from the first to make such allegations.

US prosecutors are due to bring to trial in January Nazarbayev's former bagman, James Giffen, who is charged with handling $78m in bribes for the president and former prime minister, Nurlan Balgimbayev, between 1995 and 2000. The bribes, paid into Swiss accounts, came from four US oil companies.

Giffen was the man to see in Kazakhstan when it came to oil deals. He was indicted more than two years ago but the case has moved very slowly. Some suspect this is because, post 9/11, Nazarbayev became a key US ally. Kazakhstan sits between Russia and the other Central Asian states bordering Afghanistan and Iran. Showing that Nazarbayev to be corrupt was hardly a vote for democratic change.

Giffen's lawyers say he admits making the payments but denies any wrongdoing, claiming that he was acting as an agent for the US State Department and CIA who wanted Nazarbayev onside. This is denied by CIA regional experts such as former senior spook Robert Baer.

Swiss and Belgian investigators as well as Scotland Yard have in the past had reason to interest themselves in one or other of three Nazarbayev business associates who specialized in metal deals: Patokh Chodiev; Alexsander Mashkevich; and Alijan Ibragimov. Political opponents have accused Chodiev and friends of hosting Nazarbayev or his family's foreign trips to London, Davos and the south of France.

The Chodiev group has been accused of receiving commissions from the Belgian company Tractebel ($55m) for a pipeline contract and from Labour donor Lakshmi Mittal's Ispat steel group ($100m) for the largest Kazakh steel plant. Mittal denied paying any commissions, saying any payments were for ore. Tractebel admitted its payment saying it was a consultancy fee. Clearly such large payments, as with Giffen, are destined mainly for those who make the decisions.

Allegations of corruption have been unrelenting against Nazarbayev, his family and the Kazakh kleptocracy that runs this rich and getting richer country. "Stories of bribes and insider deals involving Nazarbayev and his family abound," wrote Kazakhstan expert Martha Brill Olcott from the Carnegie Endowment three years ago. "Kazakhstan's corruption problem has been staggering."

Despite that background, recent weeks have seen a rush of Kazakh companies to the London stock market. First was the copper giant Kazakhmys to be followed by gold miners KazakhGold, parent of Kazakhaltyn, with oil group KazMunaiGaz due next year. Big fees are being earned by JPMorgan, Cazenove, Credit Suisse First Boston, ING and ABN Amro. All three companies have or will load their boards with prestigious British non-execs to disarm corporate governance concerns.

All three companies have at one time or another been either totally or partly state-controlled or heavily influenced by the Nazarbayev regime, without whose approval nothing happens. It privatized the part-owned Kazakhmys, decided a Kazakh family rather than Israeli bidders should acquire the then bankrupt state-owned gold company and formed the group that is now KazMunaiGaz.

Some of those involved with the three companies have had close connections to Nazarbayev. Kazakhmys' finance director, Oleg Novachuk, has been described as a former financial adviser to the president. Nazarbayev's brother Bolat is a former recent Kazakhmys director. Nazarbayev's son-in-law Timur Kulibayev (considered the most powerful figure after the president) was until last month first vice-president of the state-owned oil company. He is also understood to be a big shareholder in London-listed Nelson Resources, which has agreed to be acquired by Russia's Lukoil. Another Nelson shareholder is said to be former oil minister Balgimbayev whom Giffen is accused of bribing.

The unasked and unanswered question posed by the Kazakh flotations is that, given Nazarbayev's reputation and that of his country, what if any benefits has he or his kleptocratic circle received from the hundreds of millions dispensed courtesy of the London listings? Kazakhmys raised £680m from its listing last month. KazakhGold is looking for £100m.

With the oil price booming KazMunaiGaz could be the biggest pay-off. The Chinese paid $4.2bn this year for PetroKazakhstan and Lukoil $2bn for Nelson – both deals that required Nazarbayev's approval. The state-owned oil company could have reserves of one billion barrels.

The Kazakhmys directors and advisers deny there is any link or improper association with Nazarbayev. The same message is expected from KazakhGold. There is no evidence of any direct involvement by Nazarbayev or his interests.

As seen in Ukraine, any political change in Kazakhstan could result in a close review of previous privatization deals. The For a Just Kazakhstan presidential candidate, Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, told the BBC recently: "Contracts for resource industries were often the result of corrupt deals and these deals have damaged our national interests. Those contracts should be re-examined to determine how legal they were."

Fortunately for the bankers and investors, it is most unlikely Nazarbayev will lose on 4 December. Things have not changed that much since Soviet times. Witness the recent elections in oil-rich Azerbaijan across the Caspian. But the spotlight expected to be turned on to the City's love affair with Kazakhstan by the Giffen trial next year could prove very embarrassing for Nazarbayev's new best friends and their supposed regulators.

ANAGRAM CORNER

Conrad Black = Lord Bank Acc.

CONRAD BLACK may rue his decision to trade his Canadian nationality for a British peerage which could now be at risk if he is convicted in Chicago of raping and pillaging Hollinger International.

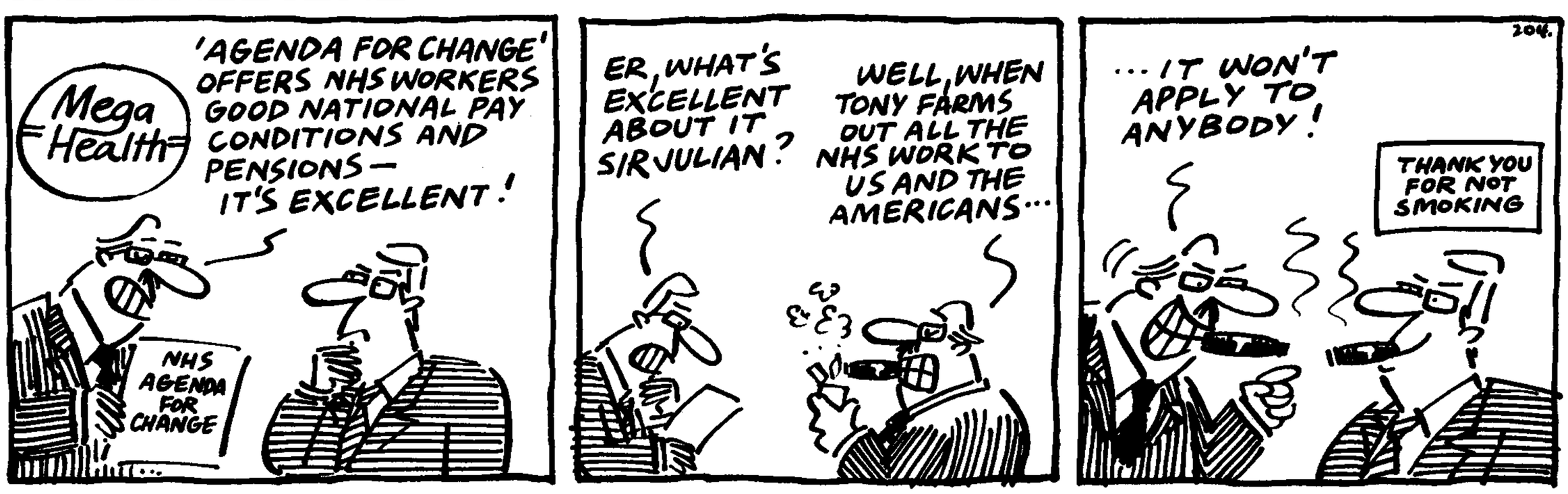
Fighting the case from Canada as a Canadian citizen might have been do-able, especially if the Canadians had also brought charges against him over his Canadian companies. For example, his old friend Garth Drabinsky, of the collapsed Livent theatre chain, has managed to hold Uncle Sam at bay since 1999 while waiting for a slow Canadian justice. But now he is British Black will have nowhere to run in Britain, where the new extradition treaty with the US allows for few serious delays and no examination of the US charges. Black is due in Chicago to answer the indictment this week. If he does not appear, he might find neither Canada nor the UK safe havens for long – or anywhere else.

THE phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed is once again selling assets to reduce his burgeoning bank debt. The sale of a Champs Elysées property owned by the Paris Ritz company has helped him to reduce that company's €141m (£96m) debt to Royal Bank of Scotland by €24m (£16m). The Ritz only began debt repayments a year ago and a final €129m repayment was due in May 2009. That final payment is now reduced to €104m, which Fayed has made clear he will look to refinance well before 2009.

That has not been made any easier by the

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


'AGENDA FOR CHANGE' OFFERS NHS WORKERS GOOD NATIONAL PAY CONDITIONS AND PENSIONS — IT'S EXCELLENT!
Mega Health
NHS AGENDA FOR CHANGE
ER, WHAT'S EXCELLENT ABOUT IT SIR JULIAN?
WELL, WHEN TONY FARMS OUT ALL THE NHS WORK TO US AND THE AMERICANS...
...IT WON'T APPLY TO ANYBODY!
THANK YOU FOR NOT SMOKING
204.

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Malcolm Rifkind's latest triumph

Winners and losers at security firm ArmorGroup, which he chairs, in the year since the float...

+ £1.1m	...outside shareholders
...Directors	– £8.9m

continued inability of the Ritz to make money. Sales went up in 2004 but so did expenses and the loss was little changed at €9m (£6.2m). Last year the loss was cut by the profits from another property sale. Total losses have now reached €163m (£112m).

Fayed has curbed the amounts he takes out of the company in repaid advances. Last year this was a mere £16,500 at its peak compared with £112,000 in 2003 and £249,000 in 2002. However, the Ritz is still feeding its lawyers. The litigation provision was £2m.

Fayed is now on his third set of auditors since 1999 when PricewaterhouseCoopers resigned and were replaced by KPMG in Jersey. During 2003 KPMG Jersey resigned and was replaced by KPMG Dublin. For a company in Paris? Clearly Fayed business as usual.

Meanwhile over at Harrods, a different auditor, Grant Thornton, is presumably still at work on the Knightsbridge numbers for 2004. The 2003 results were completed in April 2004 for the year to end-January. This year – a bad year on the High Street – it seems the figures are taking longer to add up.

VEHICLE fleet managers Venson Group, backed by Irish investor Dermot Desmond and builder John Laing, is expected to lose its prestige contract with the Metropolitan Police awarded in 1998. The outsource contract is expected to go to the RAC from next April.

Venson's position has not been helped by its walk-on role in South Africa's major corruption trial, which saw its partner, Schabir Shaik, jailed for 15 years last June. Shaik was convicted of bribing sacked deputy president Jacob Zuma, himself now charged with corruption involving payments from both Shaik and the French arms group, Thales.

Shaik's efforts to obtain a South African police fleet management contract with Zuma's help for a joint venture, Kobi Venson, was mentioned often during the trial and in the sentencing. Shaik was Zuma's financial adviser and ran the Nkobi Holdings group.

The prosecution stated that Shaik had written to Zuma in October 2000 requesting he arrange a meeting between Venson chairman Grant Scriven and the Minister for Safety and Security. Zuma arranged the meeting in Cape Town later that year but no deal was done despite pressure from Shaik.

The prosecution also stated that Shaik had arranged through Zuma for Scriven to attend a July 2001 function at which the cabinet was present. Scriven was said to have received "bear hugs" from Zuma and to have told Shaik afterwards: "I think I can safely say I am in." He was wrong.

Zuma appeared in a promotional video made by Venson about its South African ambitions. Venson and Scriven have not been accused of any wrongdoing in South Africa. However, the Shaik trial has undoubtedly ended any plans they had there and may not have helped in retaining the Met contract.

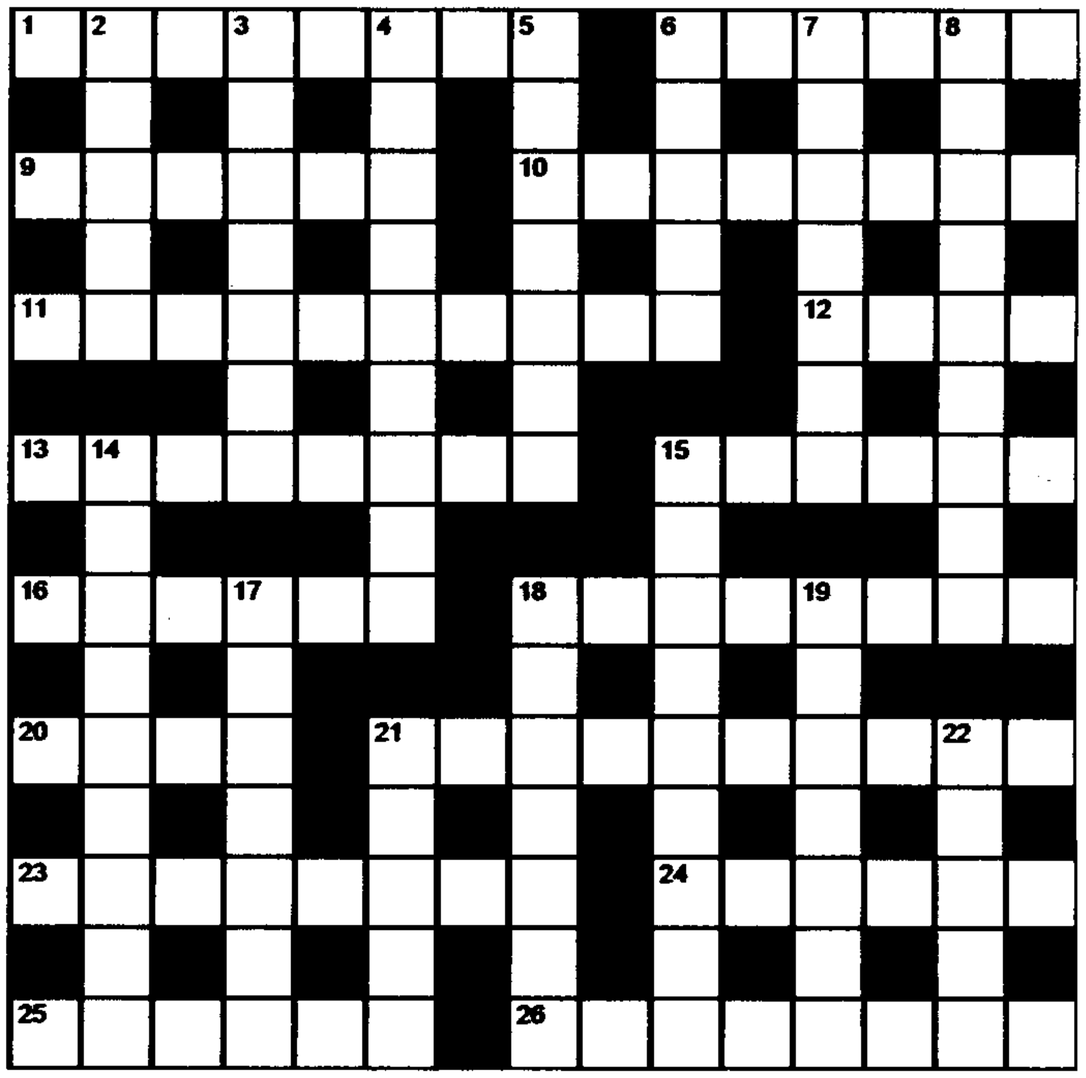
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 301

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 2 December 2005

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Restaurant takeaway for a bitch in here? (5-3)
6 One dead old politician's things one comes out with (2-4)
9 Musicians' testes pointlessly mangled – adults only allowed in (6)
10 Getting down to work, or knocking off? (2,3,3)
11/12/21dn. Bilaterally clubbing bisexual (7,3,4,5)
13 Limit French to one unfinished row (8)
15 Like an alcoholic drink, the police? Yer, like crazy! (6)
16 Go down on Prince Jab (6)
18 Pisspoor balls on youth (8)
20 Expulsion of arse, a worthless sort (4)
21 Endlessly pussy-whipped people who reach climax (they could get hooked on knickers) (10)
23 Spent long ago, Lords broken up without European agreement (5,3)
24 Barker's pants (6)
25 Old forms of transport luvvies are at home on? (6)
26 Not how ladettes behave – usually swallowing the chief of drugs, Ecstasy (8)

DOWN

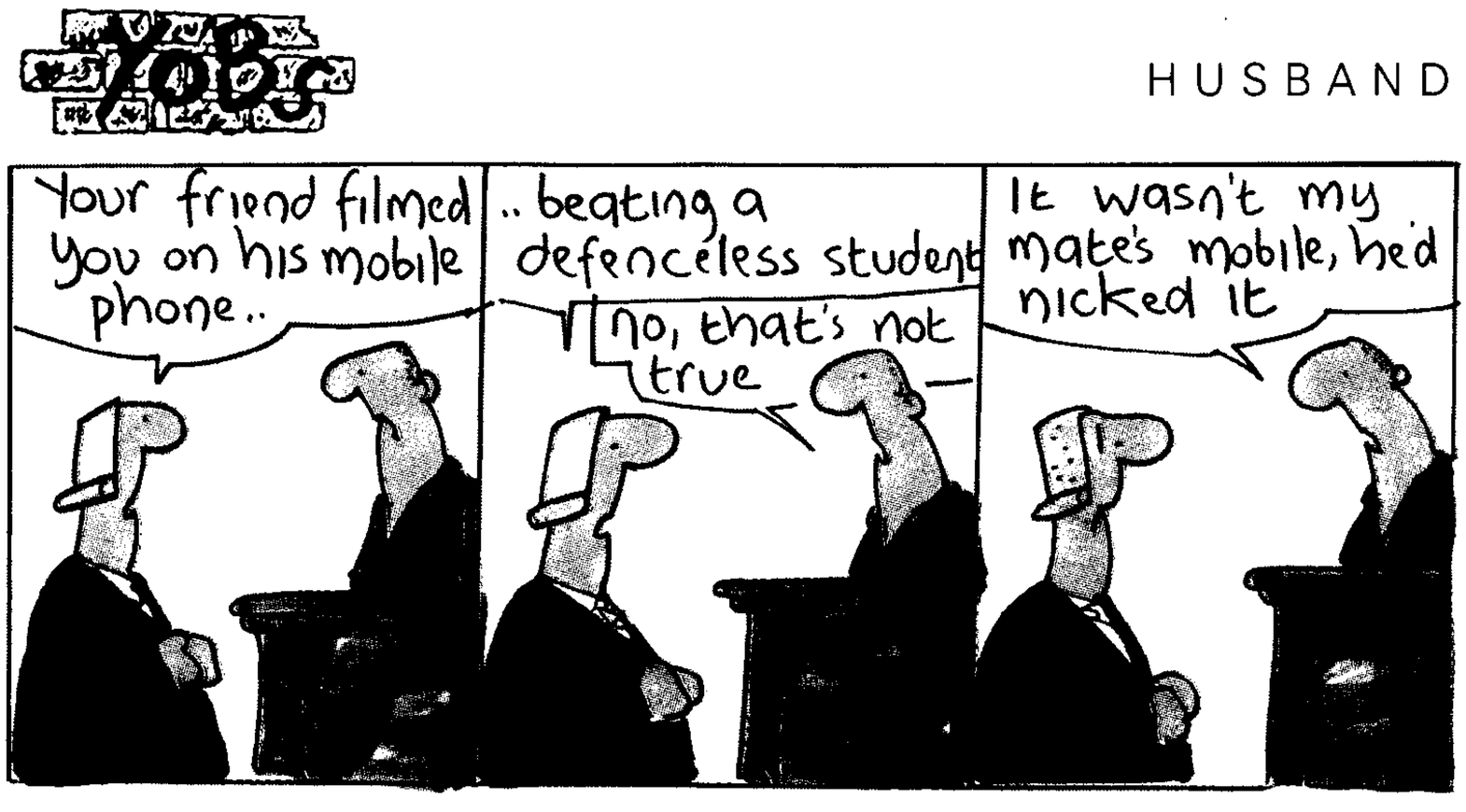
2 Head removed from piss-artist by a Salome? (5)
3 Bang in the middle of huge tit once (3,2,2)
4 Pissed, beer on tie – curse! (4,5)
5/17 Pious-free shit (4-3-7)
6 Nancy boy at heart grabbed by star queer (5)
7 Lazy git acted like Archer around a president (3-4)
8 To perform fellatio requires light aid and a hot tool (4,5)
14 Toss sailor, declared gay and laugh socks off (4,5)
15 BBC owe Deb broadcast – showing signs of long neglect (9)
17 See 5
18 Speaker's place to stick pole in bollocks? Strange (7)
19 Lists at back of book popular date with old lovers (7)
21 See 11ac.
22 Right bog: not in, not of the city (5)

Crossword 300 winner: JIM DUNN

ACROSS: 8 Ciao 9 Orlon 10 Earn 11 Yearners 12 Relaid 13 Corruption 15 Over 16 Lesbian 18 Thankee 21 Oats 23 Dehydrated 25 Patchy 26 Wagon-lit 28 Stem 29 Raita 30 Arch.

DOWN: 1 Tiresome 2 Horror 3 Robe 4 Elastic 5 Entrenched 6 Hell-born 7 Ursine 14 Plaid Cymru 17 Base camp 19 Eyepiece 20 Showbiz 22 Abaft 24 Annual 27 Graz.

(Hidden message: "Three hundredth puzzle")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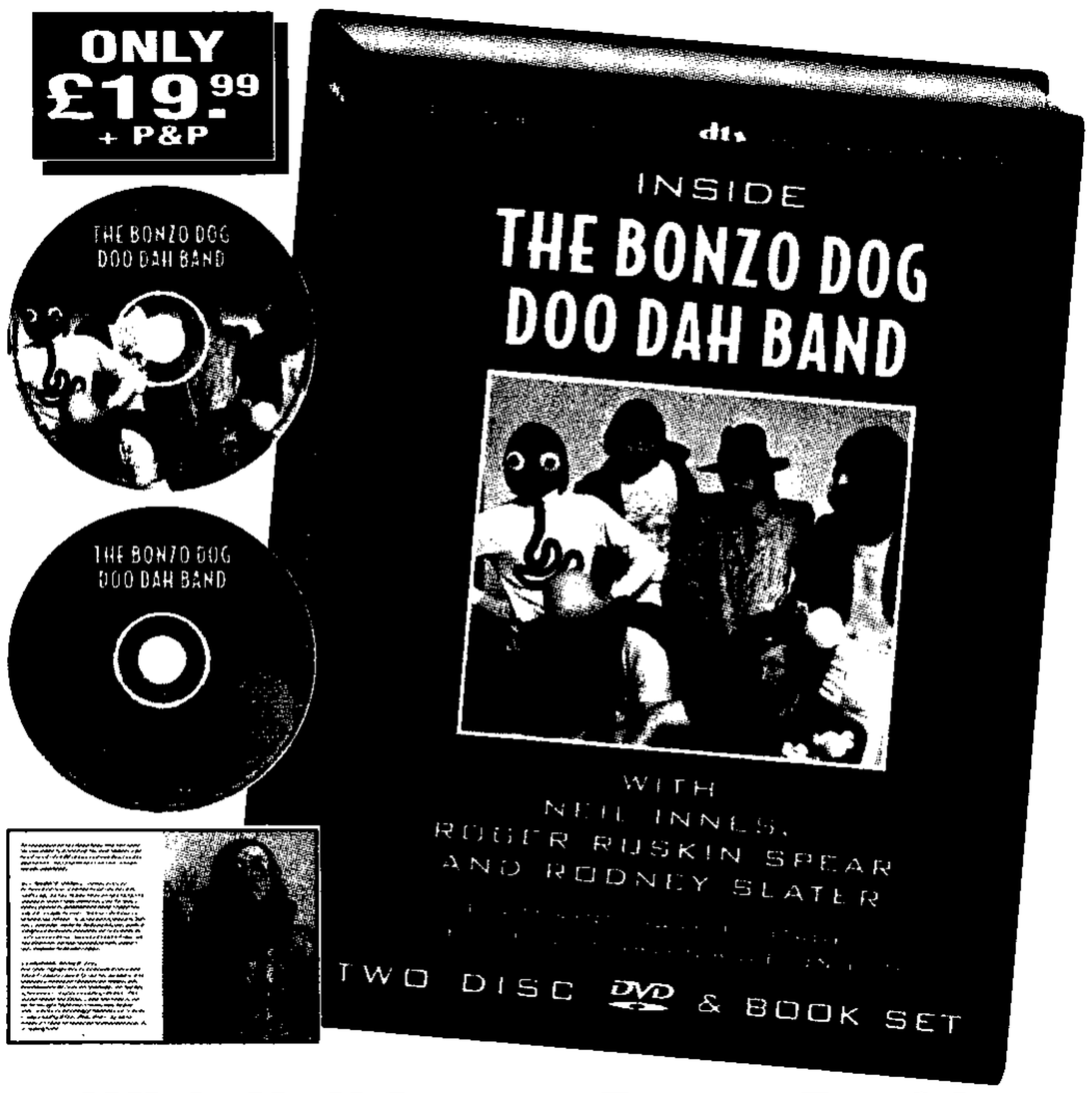

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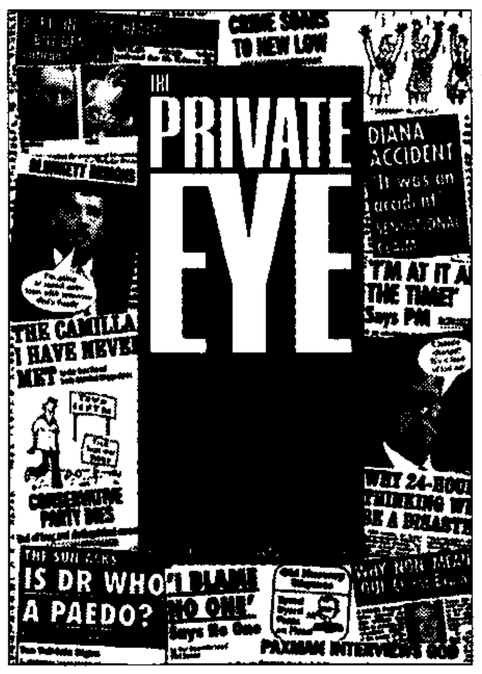

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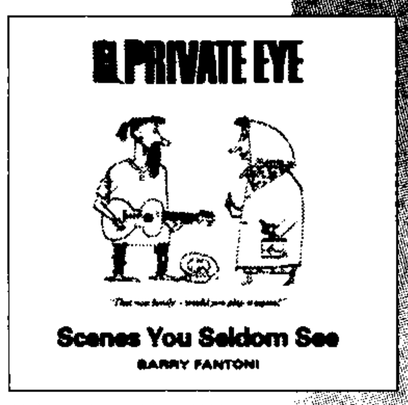

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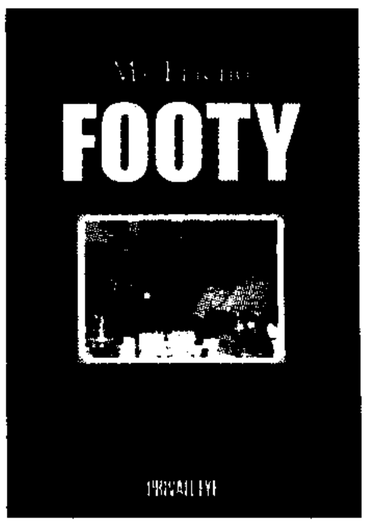

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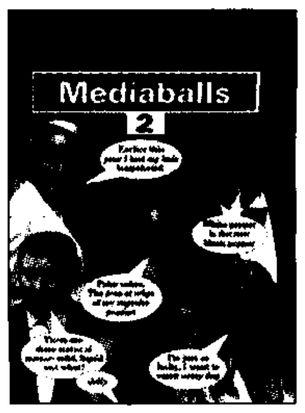

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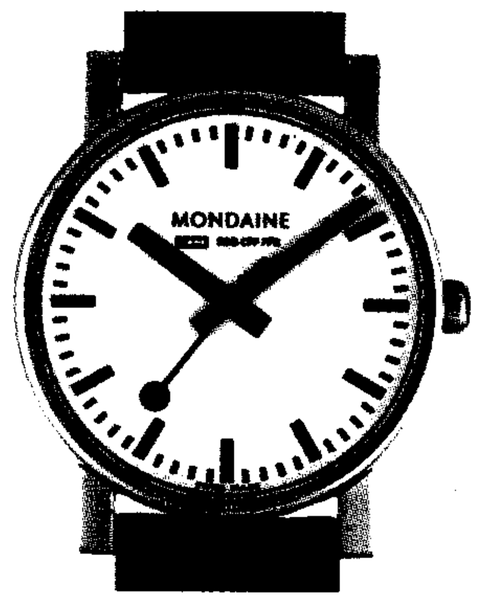

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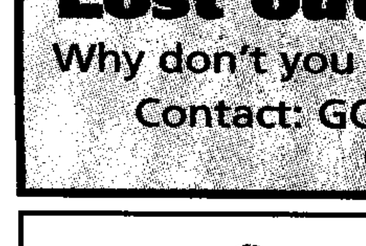

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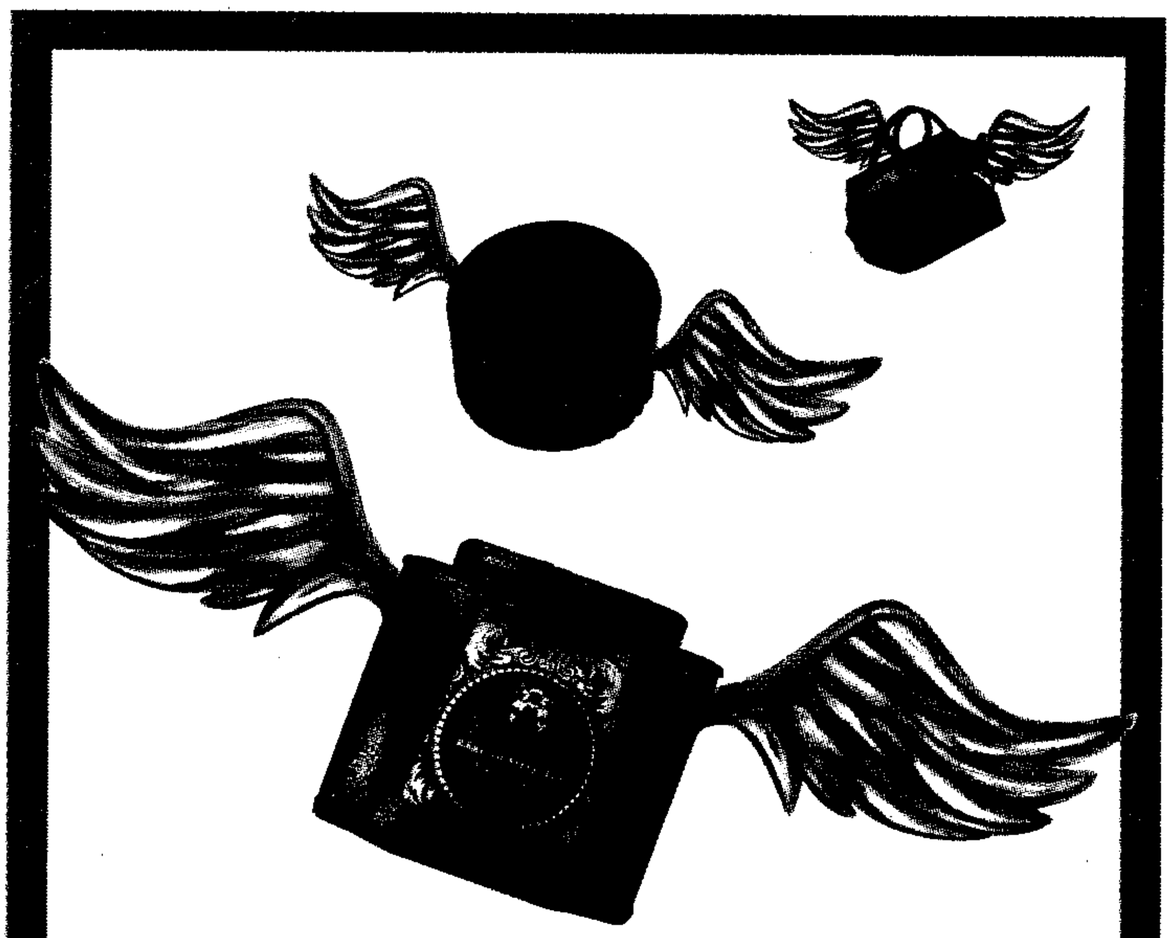

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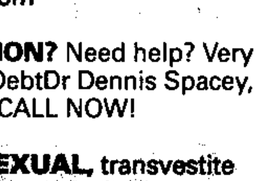
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